

A MODEL FOR EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP FOR
THE SOUTH MACON DISTRICT OF THE AFRICAN
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
December 2015

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ABSTRACT

A MODEL FOR EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP FOR THE SOUTH MACON DISTRICT OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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This ministry model is focused on the intentional study of evangelism and discipleship in the Macon South District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church among clergy and laity. The hypothesis is the belief that evangelism and discipleship are given little attention and energy in the church, which results in few conversions and practically no greater works among members. When these twin faith components are taught intentionally, the church will reap the harvest in conversions and greater works. A mixed methodology will be used to ascertain data with both a pre- and post-test surveys given to both clergy and laity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the only living and true GOD as being the maker and preserver of all things: my life included. There are so many well-wishers who have impacted my life and this project that are too numerous to name. I especially wish to acknowledge my fantastic, marvelous, terrific, tremendously gifted and extraordinarily wise mentors. Dr. Robert Walker is one of the finest Christian gentlemen I have ever met. He is an activist to the core and an effective leader who get things done. Dr. Kenneth Cummings is one of the smartest and most helpful men I have ever met that serve in such an intense environment but handles it with incredible calmness and intelligence. Dr. Rachel Magdalene, our faculty consultant, is the most academically accomplished person I have ever met. She is helpful in various ways, especially notations and documentation. You helped to get all of us through this doctoral program. Thank you all for all that you mean to me as I have depended on each of you for sacrificing and always giving your best. None of you has disappointed nor let me down. May GOD bless you continuously is my most fervent of prayers. Thanks.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to GOD the Father, GOD the SON and GOD the Holy Ghost. I asked GOD to help me with this work. He sent people into my space that went out of their way to help me. I did not know the people and had never met them to my knowledge. I met them in airports, at funerals, at AME meetings and all over the place. They talked to me as if we knew each other all our lives, and then they were gone. Some of them gave their business card, but when I called, there was no such number. Explain that if you can. In this dedication I must include my loving parents, Reverend C. W. Williamson and Turner Williamson, both now deceased. If it had not been for them, there would be no me. I am most grateful to them.

Sharon, my loving wife, has helped me in all of my endeavors as it relates to academic advancement. She told me to enroll in this program to earn the Doctor of Ministry degree and sacrificed to help me to do so. I am indebted to her for more than I will be able to repay. Our children deserve a great amount of credit as they inspired me because they are both working to earn a Master's Degree: Shemmeah her first and Garrett his second which is the Master of Divinity degree. Our grandson Nicholas, and countless others, have inspired me and contributed to this wonderful and delightful experience.

ABBREVIATIONS

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
SMD	South Macon District
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

INTRODUCTION

This project, “A Model of Evangelism and Discipleship for the Macon South District,” is a model of ministry developed as a program manual for ministry implementation based on the premise of “The Great Commission” found in Matthew 28:19-20. This is what clergy persons on every level, and laity alike, are called, equipped and empowered to do for Christ. I wanted to be a part of fulfilling the foreordained results of the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Basically, everything else has been or is being tried to find that great state of utopia does not exist outside of Jesus Christ our Lord.

It appears that people have so much work to do and no knowledge of how much time they have to get it done. It is incumbent that people of faith sense the urgency and the gravity of the overwrought of tension and earthly antagonism that is erupting all around the world without any sign of relief or letting up. There has to be an intervention of recognizable and dedicated “hope” for the condition of the world and all of humanity. Hosea 6:1-6, which serves as the Old Testament foundation text for this work, addresses the state people find themselves in. Matthew 28:19-20, “The Great Commission,” is the means by which people get themselves out. In this project, the hope is to engage the entire Macon South District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in doing this Kingdom of God work on earth as it is in heaven which is communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ and publishing it to every nation in the world. The problem that the faithful

faces is that people do not have a coherent faith quotient. That is to say that they do not know fully well the basic tenets of the Christian faith. In this line of thinking it is difficult, if not impossible, to communicate effectively what they do not understand well. This is the spiritual and emotional objective of this work: to help to bring about freedom for the captives. Jesus Christ came into the world to make disciples. It should be noted that Jesus never mentions the word Christian. The word Christian is only mentioned three times in the entire bible. It is mentioned in Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16. Because of this mentioning of the word Christian is used so infrequently in the New Testament, I am led to believe that it was not that important to Christ. He never asked anyone to call his followers Christian; however, he does refer to the disciples as “my disciples.” While Christian is only mentioned or rather referred to three times, the word disciple is stated 256 times. Now if one had to judge this by a level of importance, the word Christian would prove to be less important. Jesus came to make disciples, and disciples are his followers, learners and believers of his doctrine; they rest on his sacrifice, imbibes his spirit and imitates his examples (Mt 10:24; Lk 14:26, 27, 33; Jn 6:69). Jesus chose us, called us and sent us to go everywhere and make disciples as he has done, and that is what this project aims to do.

The Introduction will present the document as the reader will find and anticipate with the assurance that it is biblically sound, historically accurate, theologically based, theoretically engaged and all of this is intertwined in an integrative way. Chapter One addresses my spiritual journey and highlights how free and liberated I have been from the outset of being, or rather from the time that I came to the knowledge of Christ. It also speaks to the context of the Macon South District as well as integrate my passion for

ministry as it relates to this setting. Chapter Two examines the meat of the work that has to go into its inception and what others have said and are saying about the particular subject or issue of concern. This unit addresses the biblical foundation of this work: Hosea 6:1-6 and Matthew 28:19-20. Chapter Three deals with the historical foundation and explores how the subject of discipleship and evangelism unfolded in its historical context throughout the ages. Chapter Four deals with how theologians have come to understand the foundational passages used in both my Old and New Testament texts and how they understand these units of discipleship and evangelism from theological perspectives. This unit covers several different opinions and schools of thought. Chapter Five, the theoretical unit, takes a look at evangelism and discipleship from different perspectives of the social science spectrum in terms of how human behavior is understood and in return how the practice of evangelism and discipleship took place. Chapter Six deals with the methodology used in this project, which is the mixed methodology. It also deals with the field project itself in terms of the preparation and unfolding of the project and the reflection of the project and data collection. The third component of Chapter Six deals with the summary of learning in terms of what I have observed about myself, my ministry and my context as it relates to this project. Lastly, Chapter Six will cover other ideas about how this project can be replicated and what discerning things could be taken from the project and what could be added to the project to make it a more effective project.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Born in Willachoochee, Georgia, in 1950 in a Christian home, my father was an African Methodist Episcopal Church pastor, and mother was a stewardess and a choir member. Not much of anything is known by me about the time spent in Willachoochee. My early childhood was spent on a farm where my father was a sharecropper for a few white men at different times. The name that stands out foremost in my memory is Russell Met, for which my mother named me. My full name is Harvey Russell Williamson. Being too small to do any farm work, the recollections of my childhood are few, except for Old Bo, our dog. Old Bo was a take up dog. He just took up hanging around our house, and we fed him; so he took up staying with us. It is assumed that someone took a rifle, pointed it and shot it at Old Bo, but missed. Old Bo was smart enough to know that when he saw anyone raise a stick or rifle or anything that resembled a rifle at him, he ran for his life. Being aware of this, I would find a stick and raise it at Old Bo to watch him run. Boy could he run.

Memories of my childhood included clay being on the side of the road, and we ate the clay. In other words, we ate dirt. We have not been able to figure that one out yet. It had unique taste that was appetizing. On Saturdays we would go to Douglas, Georgia, which was twenty-five miles from the farm. My father's siblings would meet at my Auntie Lilla's house where my grandmother Lydia lived. It was a family reunion every

weekend. Aunt Lilla was a midwife. She brought me and my brother Ronnie into the world. To her we are eternally grateful although she has long since been deceased. Ma and daddy would go grocery shopping the early part of the day while we stayed with grandma. My grandmother seemingly always gave us (Cliff's children) a little more than her other grandchildren. She would slip a nickel in my pocket or my hand and in my brothers and sisters' hand and say, "don't tell." When my parents finished grocery shopping and returned, the brothers got together, all seven of them, my father being the youngest and the baby in the family. It is still prevalent in the Williamson family that alcohol was and is a demon of addiction. My father suffered with the disease for some years before his experience with God that changed his life. He was a functioning alcoholic that drank on weekends.

One of the cousins (by marriage) named Sally Mae would chase me all the time, threatening to put me in a garbage can. One day she managed to catch me and she did put me in the garbage can. I hate her even today and all my family hates her as well. She is forgiven though there are shades of flash back of her ugly self.

The timing maybe a little off, but if my memory serves me correctly, my grandmother became ill and we all gathered at Aunt Lilla's house to be with her. She asked that I be put in the bed with her, and she hugged me. While she hugged me, the lights became so bright and glaring until they were unbearable. I was the youngest of her youngest child Clifford, and she somehow transmitted a gift or a spirit to me. That is what I want to believe. She did not do that for any other child. She was able to attend church again; and in the church yard she stood and urinated before going into the church. That freaked me out, but that was common among older people. Sometime after that my

grandmother died. She was ninety-five years old. It was so hot at the funeral; perspiration was running down my face and back while sitting beside my mother. It was sad and overwhelming as my father, uncles, aunts and cousins cried uncontrollably. The gathering at Aunt Lilla's house became less and less.

The family moved from Russell Mets' farm to Douglas, Georgia, to the projects. All of the other siblings were in school; I was still not old enough to attend. The projects were inhabited by some fine people and some not so fine people as well. More were fine than not. We were among relatives in the projects. We fought with the next door neighbors as their names escape me. The relatives helped us and we always won.

Life and Memory of Faith

My father was appointed to Bethel AME Church in Lakeland, Georgia. I have no knowledge of any other churches where he was the pastor. It is said, however, that he was the pastor of a church in Ambrose, Georgia, as well. The family moved to Lakeland and lived in the parsonage next door to the church. My father preached and the church grew. He had a vibrant ministry there. We participated in all departments of the church: usher, choir, Sunday School, etc. I was not school age as of yet. Our next door neighbor, Mr. and Mrs. Collins, baby sat me. Mr. Collins made furniture and other household goods. He was a white man, very tall and slim. Mrs. Collins was brown skinned and tall as well. They were very kind to me. The school was just around the block, and I would leave the Collins' house with permission and walk to the school and visit with my brothers and sisters in their classrooms. The teachers all knew me and did not object to my short visits. Some would pick me up and carry me around the class while instructing the class. I

moved about freely without incident at age three and four. My father worked a secular job at the base in Valdosta, Georgia, while my mother did domestic work for white families.

As the years passed, time came for me to attend school. They built a new school several miles from the parsonage. We had to walk although a bus passed right in front of the house. Even in the rain and sometimes in the snow we walked to school. With holes in our shoes and patches on our pants we walked to school. My mother's sister, aunt Mack, sent us clothes that her children once wore or discarded. They were nice clothing, and we appreciated them. They were better than what we had. In the summer time, we worked in the tobacco fields and the cotton fields to earn money to buy school clothes. My parents could not afford to buy them for us. We dressed better, and I won the best dressed award for seniors my final year in school.

The Call to Ministry

The years passed and my schooling years came to an end. My mind soon turned to traveling. In 1969, New York became my place of residence having followed my siblings there. My first employment there was with J. C. Penney Company as a computer operator. My brother Ronnie offered me a place to stay. Church participation was part of my lot. Carter's Community African Methodist Episcopal Church was my church home. Life for me in New York included lots of fun and agony as well. The night life was important to me and joyful. The fun life and employment would soon be interrupted in a manner that changed the course of my life forever.

In 1974, in Queens, New York, at about 2:00 a.m., God sent a vision in my spirit/mind that was so vivid and unimaginable, but yet so real that I shudder to think of its brilliance and radiance even now. I was awakened to see the Heavens glisten with splendor. It was a brightness to me never seen before nor have seen since. It was of a silver hue that is unmatched by anything I have ever seen. There were faces of lions and men with crowns on their heads. All across the sky they spaced themselves, and they all stared at me. My mother was there speaking in tongues; and as I wondered about it, she said to me: "You can do it also (speak in tongues!)" Although, I have never spoken in tongues, I do have the gift. My brother was standing near me in silence beholding the sights. After several days I was directed to leave New York and return to Georgia where I would receive further instructions. I left New York on February 4, 1974. In 1975, God called me to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to his people. He gave me the scripture St. John 4:46-48. It was on a Saturday night when he showed me in the suit I was to wear and in the pulpit where I was to stand. My subject was, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." I was licensed and preached my initial/trial sermon in March of 1975 at St. Peter AME Church in McIntosh, Georgia.

In 1977, my father became ill and died. Bishop H. I. Bearden allowed me to act as pastor until annual conference later that year. At annual conference the bishop gave me the appointment as pastor in 1977. You can believe it or not, but there were some upset preachers about that appointment, mainly because this was one the best churches in the conference. I was only admitted to the conference the year before and of course did not have anything remotely resembling an ordination of any kind. However, the conference ordained me under the Mission Rule. I received my Deacon's ordination and my first

appointment at the same time. Things were moving pretty fast for this neophyte preacher. Presiding Elder J. S. Bryant of the West Savannah District in the Old Georgia Conference, my home conference, said on the day he licensed me to preach: "I predict that this young man will be one of the leaders in the church." Until recently, I did not know that the Holy Bible was talking to me. I was under the impression that it was always referencing the Jews or the Israelites and others, but I now know, accept and appreciate the fact that the Holy Bible is speaking directly to me and every other human being on the earth. It is my understanding that I have been chosen, and my father understood it as well, and he encouraged me to vigorously pursue the purpose for which I was created. Shortly after that, it was revealed to me what Matthew 20:16 means. "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." I am a part of the chosen. The passage I Peter 2:9 also speaks to my situation: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." For three years I was the pastor of these great people at St. Peter AMEC in McIntosh. For the most part, they were nice and respectful to me. It was as if they anticipated that I would be their next pastor.

Meeting my Wife

It was Friday night in Hinesville, Georgia, at a high school football game when I first laid eyes on this woman who would become my wife. I could not believe it! I approached her and tried to make conversation, but unsuccessfully. She would not give me her name or telephone number. I managed to get the telephone number from a mutual

friend. I was not able to make any progress via telephone, but when I enrolled at Savannah State College the second quarter of 1975, I saw her again. She agreed to type a research paper for me; and when she had completed it, I picked it up from her at her home on that weekend. We talked briefly, and I left disappointed and wondering if she was indeed the one. When we arrived back on campus, she yelled to me from her dormitory window asking me to wait there for a moment. She came down from her room and came up to me and did not say anything. We just stared at each other for a long time. It was at that moment that I knew that the Lord had brought her to me!

We got married and moved to Blackshear with excitement and expecting to turn the world upside down. We both had our degrees: hers in Office Administration and mine in sociology with a minor in psychology. Blackshear was a small town where tobacco and pecan labor were the best a man of African origin in 1981 could hope for. Regardless of how educated you may be, being outsiders, we had little chance of landing a lucrative position. We did not know anyone who knew anyone. I had to work because Sharon announced that we were expecting our first child, and I had to take care of her. Sharon did not shun work, so she was employed at the local egg factory. I bet you can guess how long that lasted! Two weeks and she was gone. She was too slow and could not make daily production quotas. Sharon never complained in the least about the loss of that job. Expecting a baby and smelling eggs all day long was a bad combination to say the least. I ended up hanging on the side of a garbage truck. I hung in there for as long as I could. That was one of the worst experiences I had ever had. The members looked at me swinging on the side of that garbage truck and were embarrassed to see their pastor picking up trash. The church salary was very low, and I had to do something to

supplement the salary. I learned that God was testing me to see how committed I was and if I would be willing to sacrifice my pride and dignity. I have heard that we should be thankful when God gives us a test. The reason being is that all of God's test are open book test! I passed the test in that one day the Spirit of God spoke to me saying, "I sent you to get them out of their mess, not to go around picking it up!" Shortly afterward, I was offered and accepted a position as an insurance agent, and I received an increase in salary from the church as well. Garrett Joel Williamson, our first child, was born in April of 1982. What a beautiful baby boy! He looked just like me! When my mother-in-law saw him she said, "Ooh, look at the little preacher." I have been watching since that time, and at age twenty-three years old he has been called to preach. Our second child, Shemmeah Miranda Williamson, was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1987; and she is equally as beautiful as our son, and of course, she looks just like me as well.

Pastoral Appointments

After serving as pastor of St. Peter AMEC in McIntosh from 1977-1980, I was appointed to St. James AMEC in Blackshear, Georgia, from 1980 to 1983. From Blackshear my ministry continued at St. John AMEC in Fairburn, Georgia, for four years. My next pastoral appointments was from 1984 to 1988. The next appointment sent me to Alexander Memorial AMEC in Atlanta, Georgia, where my appointment lasted for two years.

My next appointment was Greater Mount Zion AMEC in Waycross, Georgia. This appointment lasted for two years from 1989-1991. I was then sent to Townsley Chapel AMEC in Savannah, Georgia, which lasted for seven years from 1991-1997. I

Served Steward Chapel from 1997-2001. In 2000, I was sent to Greater St. Mark AMEC in Columbus, Georgia. This appointment was from 2000-2005. My next appointment was as Presiding Elder of the Thomasville/Bainbridge District in the South Conference of the Sixth Episcopal District where I served for nine years. My present appointment is Presiding Elder of the Macon South District in the Macon Conference of the Sixth Episcopal District where I have been serving in this capacity since 2014.

I have not missed more than ten Sundays out of the pulpit in thirty years of ministry. The Church is my life and it is all I know. I have held lucrative paying secular positions, but unsuccessfully. Two years and I was out, but the Christian ministry has been my element of comfort and my haven of belonging.

Contextual Analysis

This work of analyzing the context where this ministry takes place was an eye opener. Serving as Presiding Elder of the South Macon District of the Macon Conference of the Sixth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church helped me to look at the demographics of the counties where this ministry unfolds and to take into consideration some of the important factors that may help or hinder the work of evangelism and discipleship both in the ranks of the laity and the clergy as well as addressing some of the observations and thought processes of the laity of the district.

Overview of the District

The seat of the South Macon District is located in Macon, Georgia, and surrounding areas. There are churches in Warner Robins, Fort Valley, Byron, Cordele,

Marshallville, and Perry. The district is comprised of twenty-one churches in six counties and in seven cities.

The district has nineteen pastors: eleven males and eight females. Seven have earned seminary degrees. Three of the females have seminary degrees and one has an earned Doctor of Ministry degree. They are well equipped and extremely well qualified to serve and do the required kingdom work to fulfill their calling.

They are mature adults who are still employed in the corporate world and earning excellent salaries. They are not at the retirement age whereas they can afford not to exercise their earning power to prepare for such a time. However, when I visit the churches for my quarterly business session, the question is raised: "How many converts this quarter?" Now, what disturbs me is that they do not seem bothered by these non-productive results. It is as if they have become so conditioned to the overarching pressure of paying the budget that they are calloused to the true nature, meaning and reason for their calling. Planning and raising budgets are certainly important in the scheme of pastoral responsibility, but the primary objective is to evangelize and make disciples for Christ. Nevertheless, they are called for this season, for this kingdom work and will be instrumental in assisting me to carry out this effort, especially in the area of teaching on evangelism and discipleship making. I think, for that aspect of the project, they are thoroughly prepared and mission oriented.

Some of the others have under graduate degrees or at least an associate degree, but still some do not have a degree of any sort. The same response to that question, "How many converts this quarter," however, remains the same. Some are still in the Board of Examiners, which is a five- year course of study on AME Church History, Polity, Laws,

Mission and Purpose of the Church. They have not completed the requirements of obtaining a Master of Divinity Degree at an accredited school to become fully credentialed as an Itinerant Elder. Only then will they be granted all the rights and privileges of a full-fledged AME minister. They are stuck in the Board of Examiners indefinitely. I am sure this is a source for which they are frustrated and harbor some resentment toward the system. However, others have sacrificed and inconvenienced themselves and their families, myself included, for a greater degree of preparedness to serve the church in this present age. More importantly, this should be a motivating factor so that they can more effectively fulfill their mission and purpose for which they are created. Then they can more easily perform at a level that will assure their positive ministry result.

I expect to be enabled even the more by them, because they make up for their lack of formal training with true commitment, kindness, respect, warmth and dedication to God, to me and to the work. I think the fact that I have known several of them over the years and have established a good working relationship with them is always a plus. Actually, I was a pastor on the Macon District fourteen years ago and some of them were pastors on the district as well. Recently, the district was renamed the "South Macon District" prior to my being appointed Presiding Elder of it in June of 2014. I am really at home and among friends. Sharon and I have been received very warmly at a wonderful reception held for us shortly after our arrival on the district. We have been received well on every occasion since then.

Demographics of the South Macon District

I have to travel from my residence in Fortson to the furthest point on the district, approximately two hours and twelve minutes. The district's population numbers are estimated at 358,836. The ethnic composition of the district is 51.20% white, 46.00% African American, 7.10% Hispanic, and 2.8% others in Peach County. This includes Fort Valley and Byron. In Crisp County, 54.20% are white, 43.90% are of African descent and another 4.99% are a mixture of others. This is Cordele. In Bibb County the African American population is 52.50%, and the white population is 44.10%. Persons not Hispanic is 41.80% of the population. Macon is in Bibb County where the majority of the churches are concentrated: eleven. In Macon County, people of African descent make up 60.50% of the population, while white people are 36.60% of the population. The Hispanic population is 33.60% of those who live in the Macon County area. Marshallville is in Macon County. Now in Houston County, people of African descent are 29.20% and white people are 65.10%. White people not Hispanic are 58.80% of the total population and Warner Robins is in this county.¹

This elder presides over approximately 4,500 people. The concern for the district that this project will address is inadequate evangelism and discipleship practices. This is in direct relation to the unacceptable conversion levels for the district and especially for the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. The conversion numbers are almost none existent for the church of this district. There is, however, a method by which this is done,

¹ U S Department of Labor, "U S – Quickfacts," accessed January 7, 2014, <http://www.uscensus.gov/quickfacts/georgia>.

and it is solely left up to the creator of this privilege. John 6:44 states, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” That is clear, but in the same way God works through human beings to affect that effort. In like manner there is a passage of scripture that precludes the advancement of human beings toward God without assistance from another divine nature orchestrating the process. John 14:6 shares with us, “Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man come unto the Father, but by me.” This eliminates any prior notion that there are other ways to have relationship or interact with God or His Son Jesus Christ. You have to be invited. Thankfully, we all have a standing invitation. Again, evangelism and the discipleship making effort is the only way and the only chance we have at restoring fellowship with the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Ghost; they are one.

Context of the Project from a Global and Personal Perspective

Now, if disciple-making were just a pastor’s job, things would be quite simple. But if we leave disciple-making up to pastors alone, we will never win the world. We will never launch many churches unless entire congregations are organized as a disciple-making continuum where people without Christ are disciplined into the family, disciplined further into leadership and some are called by God and disciplined that they head out for the ends of the earth. We are all called. It is nowhere found in the scriptures that the Great Commission is reserved for clergy only. There is no distinction between clergy and laity as it relates to who or what position held should be making disciples. We are all called the church or “called-out ones.” The gifts and callings of God apply to every member of the Body of Christ. The greatest mistake one can make is to leave most of the work to a

few of God's servants while the rest sit back and watch. Maybe a worst mistake is to think that the church will make disciples through its programs. Disciple-making is not about programs; it is always about personalities and personal relationship.

I know that the South Macon District is the context of the project, but ultimately the world is to be won to Christ. Who is to say that this project will not reach the world? It is my feeling that disciple-making starts when the Lord shows you who belongs in your life, Christian or non-Christian. You may not even like them, but everyone has a thorn somewhere in their lives. Something has to keep us grounded.

Someone asked the question in one of my quarterly conference, "Who should I disciple?" That is a very good question to ask. I think that every Christian has a circle of friends and associates that can be their discipling assignments. These people mostly come through one's family and friends. I think that we must be concerned about our family and friends, because if they are not disciple, then the people they are supposed to reach cannot be reached, which leaves a void in the whole process. Everyone has to do his/her part for this thing to work and be all that God has created it to be.

Who occupies my circles of concern? I think it is the people that are nearby. It is true; you are closer to certain people than others. There is a concept called "lifesaving stations." This metaphor for evangelism reminds the believer that one can serve as a life guard and reach out to those in our immediate environment who are in need of hearing the good news of God's grace. Stretching this metaphor, we can look at part of the work of the church, a primary role of which, is serving as a lifesaving station. If the church does no more than reaching out to those nearby, a greater work will unfold. Your

personal circle of concern does not include the entire world. Your circle includes those in your acquaintance that God shows you to be your personal responsibility.

When Biography and Passion Meet Context

Reflections

My spiritual autobiography and contextual analysis have indeed intersected and integrated to bring me to a place where my passion meets need. This has led me to reflect back to places where I have not visited at any point until the Spiritual Autobiography Paper took me there. It was an enriching experience and took me on a stroll down memory lane. Life has been wonderful and is getting better all the time! There has not been a lot of drama, hurts, disappointments, sickness, stress, psychological issues or major trouble of any sort. My life has been basically trouble free. Like everyone else, God has always had his hand on me. I was always an obedient child and never deviated too far from the teachings/center of my upbringing. Seemingly, others saw in me things unseen and unbeknownst to me that I did not know to look for. However, there seems to have been some knowledge of an identity, a pride, a dignity, a sense of worth and significance. People treated me very nice and have helped me all the way through, even now.

It never occurred to me to cause problems for others; instead, I was one who would try to help them avoid getting themselves into problem situations. It has been my hope to be an encourager, to lift people. I see myself as one who has patience to help the person who did get into an uncompromising position to be able to get out of it. When

mistakes are made, it is not the time to bash the person over the head because of a slip up. Some things are deliberate; people mean to do what they do and express no remorse. They are worthy of compassion and understanding, nevertheless. It is what we should do for each other.

Conclusion

I believe that this project is ordained of God because of this passage of scripture: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12). I want to be a part of the greater works’ group.

There are not enough people who care enough to tell a dying world that Jesus saves. I hear the sermons preached by the pastors and there is no real conviction in their effort. This has to be a profound attempt (project) to break through decades of spiritual negligence in the church of the living God.

We must redouble our efforts because in America the ever-changing value system of morality is deteriorating right before our eyes and is threatening our very existence. Everything goes these days. God will destroy us; ask the people of Sodom and Gomorrah if you can find one. The point I am trying to make is that we are in a universal community of faith known as the church. The church is called to evangelize the world, but if you consider what I am trying to do, and why I am trying to do it, you can see that it appears that the church has removed itself from the evangelical mandate.

The reason I have undertaken this project is because I do not feel that all is gloom and doom. There are several pockets of evangelistic excellence. Many lives are being transformed because the gospel is being published to every nation. There are individuals

and churches that are making an impact that is noteworthy. In Marietta, Georgia, there is a church whose pastor and members of the evangelism team are mimicking the disciples of biblical times, and people are being taught and are responding to the gospel and becoming a part of the church by incredible numbers. Even though some of the pastors on the South Macon District are not fully credentialed as we would hope, nevertheless, they too handle the word of God weekly inside the church and even have a wider berth of contacts outside of the church. Indeed, the harvest is plentiful.

The South Macon District has to play its' crucial role in the spiritual drama of the age. We must let God use us as instruments of grace in a world that is skewed by deception. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12).

This effort will cause churches and people who have come to know the unspeakable joy of Jesus to joyfully work to enable other human beings to turn away from sin and choose a life and relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am not overly concerned at this point, about whether or not they have a seminary degree; I just want to know if they have made themselves accessible to God and are ready to be used by God, whether they are blessed of God with the Holy Ghost working in their lives, so that people will hear and respond to the Gospel. I am not ignorant to the facts; people find and have reasons for running away or rejecting the church. Our churches have become so mundane with so little to offer this generation of technological geniuses. They feel that the church does not have anything to offer them. They want to know if they will get something positive out of their investment of time and energy if they take the time to

be involved. This is reasonable given that other attractions are always grappling for their attention. If they are not receiving or experiencing any positive benefits, then they feel, well, what is the use; time is valuable, and I can be doing something else. It is a competitive world out there. The tradition of going to church because there is a church to go to with family is not as compelling as it was years ago. YouTube is readily available to the nonconformist. Sunday is not the day most of these computer, iPhone and iPad novices view whatever service of their choice. They use these devices for all sorts of entertainment, research and communication. They can do church without being in church. That still does not negate the fact that church is necessary. Hebrews 10:25 declares, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” It is the fellowship, the sharing of the gospel, the communion with God at the place where he specifies that we meet him that is most important. This is the place where we worship corporately. God invites us to His house.

Every Christian is called into the “Great Commission.” Now, if we are serious and obedient, we will all own a piece of this directive to make disciples. This is not a call for leaders or even churches for that matter; individuals are called to go. Sometimes going is painful, costly and even fearful. However, if it is part of the “Great Commission” and is personal to each of us, then each of us should be willing to bear a little pain for the sake of the gospel. After all, Jesus bore the pain of the cross for our redemption. Make no mistake; this kingdom work can be costly, and it is not for everybody. Jesus said in Luke 14:26-28: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my

disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" People have to be clear about what they are getting into before they take the plunge, and we have to teach them the rigors of such a journey. It is not always attractive, but it is worth it in the end.

Although the senior pastor often is the driving force behind an effective evangelistic ministry, a variety of approaches are needed to address the spiritual and personal needs of people in a community. The pastor must lead and the church must have a plan and support evangelistic efforts to meet monumental challenges of reaching millions of souls with the gospel during the next decade. There has to be a lot of training, prayer and willingness of heart for the task of carrying out the "Great Commission." God promises to help us deal with Satan, to meet our needs, to help with the harvest and to reward us as we evangelize the world.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The primary call of people of faith is to respond to the overtures of God. Underneath our faith is the covenant of God. Covenant is a term “used in the bible to describe the relationship between God and man.”¹ The word covenant is used many times in the bible and in many different ways and between different parties. The covenant between Israel and God is different and unique in that it speaks to both God’s promises of action and protection throughout Israel’s history: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33). “The term covenant (*diatheke*) does not appear as often as one might expect; the reason is that the underlying thought has been taken over in the sayings about the kingdom of God. Linguistically, we can see this perhaps most clearly in Luke 22:29. The new covenant and the kingdom of God are correlated concepts.”² As people of faith, it is incumbent upon those in position of spiritual (faith) leadership to lead the flock (people) in understanding God’s words and the impact that they have on our lives for faithful living. Some of these terms are covenant, law, faithfulness and the kingdom of God. The central expression that highlights our very life is the “kingdom of God.” Jesus’ parables are described and (prefaced) as life in the kingdom of God. In the prayer we

¹ *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol 1, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 365.

² *Ibid.*, 369.

called the “Lord’s Prayer,” Jesus speaks of life in the kingdom. In the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Holy Communion, Jesus speaks of life anew in the kingdom.

At the center of being faithful to the covenant is knowing who God is and what the ways of God are. We come to know both by knowing the word of God. The apostle Paul informs the believing community that faith comes by hearing. Romans 10:17 teaches, “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.”³ The work of evangelism and discipleship is inextricably interwoven into the “kingdom of God.” By way of definition,

The kingdom means the sovereign, righteous rule of God. It is a rule in which power and goodness, judgment and mercy are combined. The goal of the kingdom is directed toward a redeemed society of persons. The kingdom as God’s rule is present but points forward: ‘thy kingdom come.’ To sum it up, the kingdom of God is our ultimate challenge and our ultimate hope. Thus, it is not surprising that Jesus found in it his central message. It remains for us to discover, to declare and to live by all that is good and true in what the term implies.⁴

The work of evangelism is that of outreach to those who have not heard the good news of Jesus or have not made the public proclamation to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The work of discipleship is engaging the people of faith in the study of the word of God and its implications for life in the kingdom (of God).

Two books speak poignantly to me about communicating God’s word. *How Shall They Preach* is a book authored by Dr. Gardner Taylor. The content of this book came from lectures delivered at Yale Divinity School’s Lyman Beecher Lectures where Taylor

³ The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009). Unless otherwise noted, all bible citations will come from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

⁴ Georgia Harkness, *Understanding the Kingdom of God* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1974), 53-55.

outlines “the whole counsel of God.” Taylor writes, “In Romans, Paul begins his examination of the grand pyramid of salvation in Jesus Christ at its apex: ‘For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ This is what it is all about; the end and purpose of the slow-mounting structure of the whole Biblical revelation, culminating in the incredible Christ-Event, Immanuel-God with us.”⁵ Taylor not only speaks of the “how” of preaching but also the “what” (content and context). The church’s leadership would do well to revisit this work of Taylor in the context of “how and what shall they teach.” *How Shall They Hear* is a book written by Dr. Samuel D. Proctor. It dovetails beautifully with the work of Taylor in highlighting and outlining four vital faith issues: “The celebration of God’s presence and participation in human affairs, the assurance of spiritual renewal and moral wholeness, the affirmation of hope for a genuine human community and the awareness of the eternal in the midst of time.”⁶ The four areas succinctly sum up parameters in which the gospel can be communicated. This book, as well as that of Taylor, are wonderful tools of any preacher as she or he seeks to put forth a program of evangelism and a ministry of discipleship study for any congregation, group or denominational training.

As an introduction, it is important that people entrusted with leadership conveying the gospel message has a handle on the message in which they are to convey. It is equally important that people have a systematic consciousness of a process by which Christ shall be preached as well as a system of discipling people once they have professed Christ as Lord and Savior. With this in mind, this narrative will proceed with the biblical

⁵ Gardner C. Taylor, *How Shall They Preach* (Elgin, IL: Progressive Baptist Publishing House, 1977), 23.

⁶ Samuel D. Proctor, *How Shall They Hear* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1992), vii.

foundations for evangelism and discipleship in the life of the church universal in general and the South Macon District of the South Georgia Conference/ Sixth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In putting forth a ministry project on evangelism and discipleship, I am led to first undergird this project with biblical foundations. I have chosen to use as a primary Old Testament text Hosea 1:1-6 and Matthew 28:16-20 as a primary New Testament text.

Old Testament Foundation

Of all of the Old Testament prophets, none are more demonstrative in showing God's endearing love to the people of the covenant than the prophet Hosea. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as prophets, are colorful with a penchant for drama; however, Hosea, as a prophet and the story he conveys, has a romantic flare to it. Hosea is the first of the Twelve Prophets of the Hebrew Canon.⁷ Of all of the prophets of Israel, Hosea "occupies a unique place . . . as the only one of the writing prophets who had his home in Israel."⁸

Hosea: The Man and the Book

We know very little about Hosea except for what is revealed about him in the book that bears his name. He was the son of Beerli (Hos 1:1). He was a native of the

⁷ W. D. Stacey, *Prophetic Drama of the Old Testament* (Westminster, London: Epworth Press, 1990), 96.

⁸ J. D. Smart, "Hosea," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 2, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 648.

Northern Kingdom who bore the same name as that of the last king of Israel (II Kgs 15:30).

The home tragedy overtaking him earned him the title of 'The Prophet of a Sorrowful Heart.' Through the wrongs he suffered he came to realize the sins committed by Israel against God, and the long history of unfaithfulness to Him. The accounts of Hosea's marriage, the birth of his children and his wife's unfaithfulness and restoration make sad reading. Hosea was called to express God's message and to manifest His character.⁹

Hosea's wife's name was Gomer. He had three children: Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi – all of whom had names that were symbolic. Jezreel's name spoke of the "omen of coming judgment." Lo-ruhamah means "one who never knew a father's love." Lo-ammi signifies "one not belonging to me."¹⁰ All of these names were to speak of God's disapproval (anger) toward the unfaithfulness of Israel.

Scholars have not been kind to the many prophets during the eighth century, especially in Israel, with the exception of Amos, Isaiah and Micah. Amos 7:14 speaks to the prophets of the north (Israel) as being in the land when he traveled there to prophesy, but they were the degenerate type that he scorned to be counted one of them.¹¹

The book of Hosea is divided into three sections. Chapters one through three speaks to Hosea's "personal experience in marriage, his relation with his wife being interpreted as a parable of Yahweh's relation with Israel."¹² Judgment is the primary theme of these chapters. A hopeful note is a possibility with a day of restoration for

⁹ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI Lamplighter Books, 1958), 149-150.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹¹ Smart, 648.

¹² *Ibid.*, 169.

Israel. The second division of this book is chapters four through thirteen. This section contains “oracles which expose the corruption of the nation, the irresponsibility of priests and prophets, the unfitness of kings and princes to rule, the spiritual degeneracy of the population, conditions which make it impossible for Israel to continue much longer as a nation.”¹³ No words of hope are spoken following this proclamation of future doom. The third section is chapter fourteen. Some scholars believe that editorial work may have been involved in this chapter. “In ch. 14 the darkness lifts and again the note of hope is sounded. One of the basic questions to which an answer must be found is whether the passages expressing hope for the more distant future are original to Hosea or have been added, as in some other prophetic books, by a later editor who knew that judgment was not God’s final word to Israel.”¹⁴

Historical Setting

Hosea lived in the middle of the eighth century and prophesied during the third quarter of it after Amos.¹⁵ “Hosea’s prophecy dealt primarily with the Northern Kingdom of Israel – its religion, morals, and politics – and his favorite name for the land was Ephraim. Hosea was the prophet of the decline and fall of the Northern Kingdom, and

¹³ Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible*, 169.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

stood in the same relation to Ephraim in the eighth century as that in which Jeremiah stood to Judah a century and a half later.”¹⁶

Hosea prophesied during “Israel’s last days in a time of national expansion and prosperity under Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:23-29). As often happens during good times, Israel strayed from the Lord, who brought them out of Egyptian slavery and chose them as God’s covenant people (Ex 1-19). Israel retained a superficial commitment to the Lord, but in reality they worshiped the Canaanite Baals, and relied on their own economic and political prowess to sustain them. Hosea recognized such misplaced priorities as idolatry that corrupts all aspects of life: social interactions, political and national life.”¹⁷

For many generations Israel and Judah were not disturbed by any power greater than the small countries in the area. This relatively peaceful situation came to an end in the middle of the ninth century when Assyria emerged as an empire and began to lead many expeditions across the Euphrates, compelling most of the states of Syria as well as the Northern Kingdom of Israel to submit to her sovereignty and to pay tribute.¹⁸ For Hosea, “there was no legitimate king in the country at all. Kingship derived its prerogatives from a divine election; but of the kings who emerged from violence and rebellion, the word proclaims: They made kings, but not through Me. They set up princes,

¹⁶ Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets*, 3rd ed. (Peabody, MA: Prince Press/Henderson Publishers, 2000), 39.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 40.

but without my knowledge.”¹⁹ “Hosea was to accuse prophets and priests alike of complete irresponsibility in their office, and, in their ignorance of the true nature of God, of guiding the people into pagan practices rather than into a pure faith (4:4-6).”²⁰

The book of Hosea is shared in terms of “the relation of Israel to Yahweh, and it is discussed in terms of marriage imagery.”²¹ Much of the bible is shared in images, symbols and allegories. Hosea’s marriage was one, some scholars think, that fall into the latter category.

Some commentators in the past have relinquished the idea that we have here an incident in the life of Hosea and have interpreted the passage either as the account of a vision, or as a rise to similar reactions. Complex actions, hard to interpret, are assumed never to have happened. It is, however, one thing to have doubts about what seems impossible, quite another to reject what is merely baffling. Most modern commentators accept that there is historical layer behind this narrative, though there is no unanimity about what it is. Whatever disagreements exist, there is widespread agreement that the marriage to Gomer must be understood as prophetic drama.²²

Regardless of the difference of opinions concerning the biographical material on Hosea’s marriage, the symbolism of his marriage to Gomer and the unfaithfulness was a powerful image. “Like Hosea’s wife, Gomer, Israel was Yahweh’s adulterous wife. God would bring judgment against her, driven by his righteous, though still merciful, character.”²³ Prophetic drama or not, the passage speaks volumes to the people who were the

¹⁹ Heschel, *The Prophets*, 47.

²⁰ “Hosea,” 649.

²¹ Stacey, 97.

²² Ibid.

²³ QuickVerse 8.0. New Commentary on the Whole Bible: Old Testament Volume, 97-98.

recipients of the prophet's word that day and has present day implication for people of faith.²⁴

Evangelistic Seeds in the Old Testament

Evangelism is a New Testament term that speaks to the believing community of faith engaging non-believers and inviting them into the fold. Wherein this concept is well defined and operative under the New Covenant, this is not the case for the Hebrew tradition and Judaism. In other words, was there evangelism in the Old Testament?

In the New Testament, the primary form of evangelism came through preaching. However, missionary efforts of caring for others and offering gifts also has an evangelistic flavor to it. Notwithstanding the nationalism exhibited in Nehemiah and Ezra, there are some events in the life of Israel that point to early seeds of evangelism.

The call of Abraham and his life have in it aspects of how other nations would be blessed (Gen 12:2-3; 17:4, 16; 18:18; 22:17-18; 26:4; 28:14). Isaiah 49:6 speaks to Israel's work also involving "being a light to the Gentiles." In the Old Testament there is not a primary position of evangelism as a missionary calling; rather, Israel was to be a special kind of nation where the people lived a certain type of quality of life, and in this uniqueness, it would be sanctified before the Lord so that other nations would take notice.

Old Testament Roots of Discipleship (in the Judaic Tradition)

Some scholars point to Exodus 18:13-26 as a focal point for the Old Testament roots of discipleship. Verse 20 is most poignant: "teach them the statutes and instructions

²⁴ QuickVerse 8.0. New Commentary on the Whole Bible: Old Testament Volume, 97-98.

and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do.” Upon the advice of his father-in-law Jethro, Moses selects persons from among the people and trained them. In this passage we see discipleship being associated also with leadership. Verse 21 speaks to the importance and role of character in leading and teaching.

The sixth chapter of Deuteronomy is instructive in matters relating to teaching and discipleship.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates. (Dt 6:4-9).

This passage in Judaism is known as the Shema and became Judaism’s confession of faith.”²⁵ According to rabbinical tradition this confession is a two-fold injunction: “to love Yahweh utterly and to manifest this by perpetually calling to mind and inculcating his commandments.”²⁶ These references along with others are certainly at the center of teaching (discipling) both in home and in the centers of faith.

The Prophet’s Words and Faith Implication

Herbert Lockyer points out four primary lessons that we learn from the broken-hearted prophet that we know as Hosea:

1. Anguish quickens apprehension.

²⁵ J. A. Wharton, “The Shema,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol 4., ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 321.

²⁶ Ibid.

2. Iniquity inspires moral indignation.
3. Suffering begets sympathy.
4. The divine character sanctifies human conduct.²⁷

This last lesson, human conduct, is of importance in this study of evangelism and discipleship.

Hosea 6:1-6

Hoses 6:1-6 begins with a call to return (repent) to the Lord. Many biblical scholars state a context for understanding Hosea's message in blocks of scripture. In order to better understand the text above, it has to be read in a larger context of Hosea 5:8 – 7:16. These words are addressed to a people during the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic war.²⁸ "Come, let us return to the Lord; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up (vs 1)." Against this backdrop is a people of faith, Judah, who has sought their security without the approval of God. "Hosea condemns the substitution of nationalism for the God who is revealed as savior and ruler of the people. Despite their sacred past, Ephraim and Judah pursued political policies and alliances without dependence on God (5:10, 13).²⁹ This seems to be a recurring theme of Israel.

Hosea 6:1-3 contains a song of penitence, picking up the medical imagery of 5:13 and expressing exactly what was called for in 5:15. Rather than going to 'Dr. Assyria' for help, the people of Israel are urged to seek help from the true

²⁷ Lockyer, 150

²⁸ James Limburg, *Hosea - Micah*, Interpretation (Atlanta, Ga: John Knox Press, 1988), 26.

²⁹ *The Wesley Study Bible*, "Commentary on Hosea," ed. Joel B. Green (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 1076.

Physician, the Lord. If they repent, their fortunes will be reversed, just as surely as the dawn comes each morning and the showers come each springtime!³⁰

Commenting on this same block of scripture above, one commentator writes,

Unlike the 'great king,' however, the chastising God is the only one who can heal them and bandage their wounds. Again, this block of scripture (the three verses above) have been singled out for special study by scholars because of its implications for resurrection theology. Their interpretations can be classified as follows: (1) those who interpret 6:1-3 in the light of the rising from death to life celebrated in Canaanite fertility cults; (2) those who regard the rising in these verses as healing from sickness; (3) those who think that 6:1-3 evinces a doctrine of the resurrection of the body after death; and (4) those who construe 6:1-3 as a covenantal resurrection.³¹

Here the central themes are returning to God and renewal.

Repentance is a theme that runs throughout the bible. The prophets are constantly calling people to repentance. Hosea lived in a time of prosperity and security for the nation. Part of the sinfulness of the people was their attraction to Canaanites (Baal) fertility gods which in fact goes against their covenant of worshipping the one true God: Yahweh. Hosea's words of denunciation and judgment to the people may have seem hollow amidst both economic and military security. Again, the people are called to repent and return to God. This same God who has chastised and disciplined them will now "bind them up, revive them, and raised them up." God's response to their turning and faithfulness is summed up in rich imagery. "God's appearance is as certain and reliable as the dawn that comes each morning. God comes to the people like the autumn and spring rains, which water the earth. The sun and the rains are necessary ingredients for fruitful

³⁰ *The Wesley Study Bible*, "Commentary on Hosea," 1076.

³¹ Gale A. Yee, "Hosea 5:15 – 6:3," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville, TN; Abingdon Press, 1996), 249.

agricultural seasons. In contrast to the drought that comes upon the land because of the nation's covenantal infidelity, the rains will give drink to a thirsty land."³² At the center of both evangelism and discipleship is the teaching of the Sovereignty of God who requires fidelity in all matters pertaining to faith.

The response of evangelism is one of entering into faith by and through repentance. Whereas in the dispensation of Jesus, baptism follows; in the return of Israel, the people would be renewing their covenant with God. Of particular interest in the two verses are the words "word" and "light(ning)." "The language is figurative - the first clause seems borrowed from hewing hard wood and shaping it so as to assume the required form; so God dealt with Israel to bring them into shape morally symmetrical, and make them of the "word" or "the word of God." Other expressions used are the "word of life" or the "word of the spirit." Notwithstanding the heartache of God that the prophet shares, God's word is still operative in repentance, teaching and learning for the people of God. The prophet speaks of God slaying the people through his word. Here is the creation notion of God as revealed in his word. "God says 'Let there be light,' light instantly appears. The spoken command and its desired result occur simultaneously. Words of blessing and curse were thought to take effect immediately as they were uttered. God warns Israel and Judah through the prophets to repent and keep the law."³³ All of this takes place through the "word" of God.

The word of God is spoken throughout Scripture. It was spoken through the prophet Moses as well as the prophets. What then is the meaning of "word" as it relates to

³² Yee, "Hosea 5:15 – 6:3," 251.

³³ Ibid., 252.

being spoken of by God? “In the OT, the characteristic means whereby God makes his will known to men in law and prophecy, and achieves his purposes in the providential guidance of the world. By it, indeed, he created the heavens and the earth.”³⁴ Many times the phrase “word of God” is used. The meaning speaks to one overall principle and that leads to faith behavior.

The Principle Theme of God’s Word by Hosea

Another central themes of Hosea’s message is expressed in the sentence, “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6; cf. 4:1). According to Matthew 9:13 and 12:7, Jesus quoted it on two occasions.”³⁵ “Verse 6 (6:6) stresses the reason for God’s impending judgment. In contrast to the fleeting *hesed* of Ephraim and Judah, God desires an authentic covenantal love and knowledge of the divine and rejects their meaningless sacrifices. It is not the sacrificial system that Hosea condemns, but the dishonesty of its worshipers, whose conduct blatantly contradicts the demands of God covenant.”³⁶ Herein lies the center of the work of the prophets and the purposes of God as we understand it. God is calling people to faithfulness through his “word.” The prophet is an instrument of God that shares this word. The prophets were more than wild-eyed peculiar creatures who spoke the word of God. They were the nation’s teachers. As the New Testament epistle reminds us, faith comes by hearing. Hosea spoke to the nation and reminded them of the basic tenets of the Hebraic faith. He pointed them to God. He help

³⁴ Yee, “Hosea 5:15 – 6:3,” 252.

³⁵ Limburg, *Hosea - Micah*, 26.

³⁶ Yee, “Hosea 5:15 – 6:3,” 252.

them to know God's will. "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offering" (Hos 6:6). What is this knowledge? It contains the teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures as outlined in God's covenant with the people, God's law handed down through the prophets, the recalling and celebrating the Festivals that highlight the deliverance of a nation and the mighty acts of God. This knowledge speaks of not only how one is to respond to God in faith but also in how one treats one's neighbor. This is the essence of discipleship as recorded in this passage: to turn to God, trust in God, obey God's commands and immersed oneself in the knowledge of God.

New Testament Foundation

One cannot turn too many pages in the gospel narratives without coming across the words and expressions: "come unto me" or "follow me." They are numbered among the watchwords of the faith. My ministry project speaks to developing and employing a ministry of evangelism and discipleship in the South Macon District. The motivation behind this project is that it is a need of my present ministry context and also a passion of mine. I will now turn my attention to the New Testament (Gospel) passage of Matthew 28:16-20 and highlight how it speaks to this subject.

Toward Definitions: Evangelism and Discipleship

The first followers of Jesus, often referred to as The Twelve, were called disciples. A definition of the word disciple will follow later in this writing. After the resurrection of Jesus, these persons and the replacement for Judas, were called apostles.

The word apostle is a noun form of a Greek word that means “to send off or out.”³⁷ It is a title “denoting a commissioned messenger or ambassador. It occurs seventy-nine times in the NT, but with various shades of meaning, both of a precise and of a general character.”³⁸

Throughout his ministry in his teachings, Jesus constantly spoke of his person and work in the context of having being sent by his Father. “In turn, he ‘send out’ his disciples with his own authority to continue and extend his mission.”³⁹ The synoptic gospels highlight the commissioning and the naming of the Twelve as apostles (Mark 3:14ff; cf. Matt. 10:1ff; Luke 6:13 ff) and of their subsequent report to Jesus.⁴⁰ The gospel themselves along with church tradition “ascribed to the Twelve the title of apostle, not only on the basis of this narrative, but also by reason of the postresurrection commission given to them by Jesus (cf Matt. 28:19-20).”⁴¹

The span of Jesus’ earthly ministry was about three years according to most scholars. During that time we see his birth, a brief episode of him as a twelve-year old and as an itinerant prophet who was more than a prophet. The evangelist Mark opens his gospel with Jesus beginning his ministry at the Sea of Galilee calling out to two sets of brothers who were fishermen to follow him and how he would make them fish for men (Mark 1:16-20). From that point on Jesus went about healing and preaching. He would

³⁷ M. H. Shepherd, Jr., “Apostle,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1, ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (Nashville, TN; Abingdon Press, 1986), 170-171.

³⁸ Ibid., 171.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

later call others as his itinerant followers until the number reached twelve. For sure, there were other people who were followers of Jesus: both male and female. In his ministry Jesus taught primarily in parables. Taken from the Greek word *parabole*, the English word parable is taken from a verb that means “to be similar or to be comparable.”⁴² Using this literary form as a teaching tool, Jesus taught the multitudes the “word of God” using as a primary phrase “the Kingdom of God.”

Kingdom of God

Taken from the Greek *basilea tou theo*, the expression “kingdom of God” was the primary theme in the teachings of Jesus. Any attempt to understand the concepts of evangelism and discipleship involves understanding the teachings of Jesus, especially as the teachings relate to the subject the kingdom of God. Howard Snyder writes, “What people believe about the kingdom often shapes what they do. As Jerald C. Brauer wrote, ‘The kingdom of God is one of the most fruitful yet controversial concepts in Christian theology. It has been employed to uphold the status quo, and it has been a revolutionary ideal used to break social forms and customs.’”⁴³

In their book, *The Old Testament Roots of Our Faith*, Paul and Elizabeth Achtemeier give the background and explanation in how the Twelver Tribes of Israel became a unified force that led to a different type of civil government. When the tribes left their wilderness experience behind and entered into the land called Canaan, they

⁴² M. H. Shepherd, Jr. “The Lord’s Supper,” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), 159.

⁴³ Howard Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 12.

settled the land and began life anew.⁴⁴ These tribes had the memory of the great acts of Yahweh and a unified faith but little more. The closing verse of the book of Judges summarized life for them. “In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25). The tribes were at a disadvantage when it came to matters of security and peace. They united against the threat of invasion by their neighbors. They had no central government nor standing military. The book of Judges highlights this period. In times of war, they were led by individuals in the different tribes who are known in history as judges. Many of them were farmers. It was because of the constant threat of war and their attraction to how their neighbors had kings who led them, that they cried out to the prophet among them to give them a king.

Addressing the subject of the change that was to come, the Achtemeiers write,

In this situation, Israel had to come to terms with the problems of history. He had to have a leader capable of unifying tribal action and policy. He had now settled down in a land, as a nation among other nations, and that historical situation demanded a central control. Israel, facing the threat of the Philistines, had to have a king! ‘We will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.’ (I Sam. 8:19-20; cf. vs. 5.) Such was the nature of the demand which the Israelites laid upon their last Judge, Samuel.⁴⁵

How tragic was this ill-advised thinking for the people.

The truth of the matter is that Israel already had a king. Yahweh was his king, and from the time of the Exodus on, Yahweh had ruled over his people (cf. Exod. 15:18), enthroned upon the ark, leading them in battle, conquering all their foes (cf. I Sam. 12:7-12). The Judge Gideon therefore had refused to become a king over Israel. ‘I will not rule over you,’ he had told the people, ‘and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you’ (Judg. 8:23). To trust the leadership and protection of someone other than Yahweh was to exhibit a lack of faith, and

⁴⁴ Paul J. Achtemeier and Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Old Testament Roots of our Faith* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 86.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

by demanding that Samuel anoint for them a king, the Israelites were rejecting the sovereignty of Yahweh.⁴⁶

Here was a shift in history that gave rise to the concept of kingdom. Though Yahweh acquiesce to a king at the people's request, the king would be God's anointed and to rule from a book as dictated from God. "Israel's hopes for its future, therefore, came to be centered in large measure around the person of its anointed king, of its 'Messiah,' which is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew word for 'anointed.' The people felt that if they had a perfect king, then all the blessings of God would be bestowed upon them in full measure."⁴⁷ Psalm 72 speaks of some of these blessings such as the gift of peace and security, abundant crops, fertile fields, prosperity and homes. Israel's thought was that when the perfect king (messiah) ascended the throne, she would be in Isaiah's word, "the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land."⁴⁸ Throughout its checkered history, Israel's God was Yahweh. Throughout the wilderness experience, conquest (or settling) in Canaan, its battle, its beleaguered kingdoms and exile, God was still king. The hope for the people rested in the promises of God to David and his kingship of the longing and coming of the Messiah (King).

It is to the fulfillment of this messianic hope that the New Testament refers when it says that Jesus Christ was the Son of David, the one who would restore the kingdom to Israel. But our Lord represented a different kind of Messiah and a different kind of kingdom that those expected by the Jews. His was a kingship and a kingdom foretold by the prophets, and to their proclamation we now must turn to complete our story of Israel.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Achtemeier, *The Old Testament Roots of our Faith*, 86.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 102.

This is a partial review of the backdrop of the Old Testament roots when we speak to the subject of Jesus' teachings on the kingdom and the kingdom of God.

Jesus the Teacher and the Kingdom of God

When the invitation of Jesus – “follow me” – was extended to those in his hearing, Jesus spoke (taught) passionately about the ways of God and the will of God for the people of the covenant. Again, Jesus did much of his teachings in parables which he began with the phrase, “the kingdom of God is like.” In addressing the subject the kingdom of God, Howard Snyder writes, “Kingdom of God is itself a model, a metaphor for understanding the world and God’s relation to it. Some would say, in fact, that this is the primary model of salvation introduced by Jesus. It is a highly symbolic representation that immediately suggests a number of things about God and God’s relationship to the world.”⁵⁰

“In all four gospels Jesus is addressed as *didaskalos*” which means teacher.⁵¹ Jesus was called both teacher and rabbi. “Jesus laid claim not merely to prophetic but to messianic authority, first in a hidden fashion and then quite openly within the inner circle of his disciples.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom*, 25.

⁵¹ “Teacher as a form of address for Jesus,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds., Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press. 1992), 807.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 808.

Commissioning and Sending Forth

On an appointed mountain in Galilee, the risen Christ met his disciples.

And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age’ (Matt 28:16-20).

The editors of the bible has given the sub title “The Commissioning of the Disciples” to the above passage. The Christian Church has called this passage “The Great Commission.” In The Wesley Study Bible (NRSV), the commentary reads, “What is needed for the world to believe the message of Jesus? Live it! Telling, in Matthew’s Gospel, is about our mission as the church. Without mission there is no Christianity. The mission of the church today, as it was for the early church, is to reconcile us to God.”⁵³ So the work of the followers of Jesus is summed up in telling or – as some refer to it – telling the story of Jesus and his love.

The disciples, following the messages of the women who reported Jesus’ resurrection, find themselves on a mountain in Galilee with the resurrected Lord. “Matthew understands that they [the disciples] remained in Jerusalem until they received the announcement of the women, on the basis of which they returned to the mountain Jesus had appointed for their post-resurrection rendezvous.”⁵⁴ “The basis for this faith is not an appearance of Jesus to them, but the testimony of the women, which they have accepted.”⁵⁵ It is of interest to note that this epic moment that was to kick start the

⁵³ *Wesley Study Bible*, 1205.

⁵⁴ M. Eugene Boring, “Matthew,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, vol. VIII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 502.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

mission of the disciples to the world was undercut by doubt. This doubt was the reality of imperfect disciples. “Whatever the nature of the resurrection event, it did not generate perfect faith even in those who experienced it firsthand. It is not to angels or perfect believers, but to the worshipping/wavering community of disciples to whom the world mission is entrusted.”⁵⁶

Verse 16 points out that there were eleven disciples there. Following the betrayal of Jesus, Judas was no longer numbered among the Twelve. This verse pointed out that though they worshiped Jesus there, some still doubted. In the midst of any fear and doubt, Jesus greeted his disciple and pointed to the authority (in heaven and earth) given to him. What is the nature of this authority?

“The Great Commission is directed to His church and to the eleven apostles on a mountain in Galilee, is directed to His church and to all Christians. It teaches the power and authority for the church’s missionary task. God the Father has given authority to the Son. The authority is valid in heaven and on earth. The authority is to make disciples. We must confess God has authoritatively commanded us to take up the missionary task.”⁵⁷

Authority and power are central themes of the life of Jesus and his ministry. “Authority is the right to effect control over objects, individuals or events. While human authority may be delegated, God’s authority arises from himself alone. In the NT the usual term of ‘authority’ is *exousia*.”⁵⁸ Throughout his ministry, Jesus’ authority was

⁵⁶ Boring, “Matthew,” 502-503.

⁵⁷ QuickVerse, Disciple Study Bible, Matthew 28:18.

⁵⁸ *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 50-51.

manifested and presented in his healings and teachings. “He teaches with authority and not as the scribes” (Mk 1:22). Jesus claimed the authority to forgive sins and to pronounce judgment (Mt 10:20-24). On several occasions, Jesus states that the Son of man possess unusual authority.

The Evangelists perceive divine authority and power as the mighty revelation of God in Christ in order to advance his kingdom. When the disciples display God’s power, they do so not in their own right but in the name of Jesus. Jesus’ authority and power, emerging as fresh revelations of the Messiah’s true identity, have provided a foundation for the church’s christology.⁵⁹

Now, the resurrected Lord declares this authority and power and empowers the disciples/apostles to move forward with this measure of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel To All Nations

The disciples are directed to go forward and make disciples of all nations. The collective history of the Jews had come full circle. From the days when God called Abram from Ur of the Chaldea to go forward throughout Israel’s checkered history to the Conquest to the days of nationalism to Isaiah’s revelation in prophecy that God had called Israel to be a light to the Gentiles to the present, the disciples – followers – are being made apostles and sent forth to all nations. The first act of their work is baptizing. The word baptism comes from the word *baptizein* which means to wash.⁶⁰ “The term ‘baptism’ is employed in the NT mainly of the rite practiced by John The Baptist, and of the Christian rite which, from the day of Pentecost onward, was the regular means of

⁵⁹ *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 53.

⁶⁰ J. M. Furness, *Vital Words of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 22.

initiation into the Christian community.”⁶¹ From the day when he appeared in the Jordan valley (river) to be baptized by John, Jesus now employs baptism as a ritual of cleansing from sins. This act now precedes one’s entry into the life of faith (the Christian Church). Sometimes baptism is spoken of “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38) or “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16). In Matthew’s passage baptism is undertaken “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” as the baptism formula. “After the resurrection, the invitation to discipleship is open to all people of all nations. That is, people are not called to become individual believers but are to be enlisted as disciples within the Christian community, whose reception of the Christian message in faith must be actualized in their lives.”⁶²

Discipleship and Teaching

The authority given to Jesus from God is now given to the disciples to make disciples, baptize and teach. As the gospel of Matthew comes to an end, William Barclay summarizes Jesus’ last words in that “he assured them (the disciples) his power; he gave them a commission; and he promised them a presence.”⁶³ What then is the gospel? “Gospel is the modern form of the Anglo-Saxon word ‘god-spell,’ a story from or about a god, and is a rendering of the Latin *evangelium* . . . understood popularly as meaning

⁶¹ W. F. Flemington, “Baptism,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1., ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 348.

⁶² M. Eugene Boring, “Matthew 28:16-20,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, vol. VIII, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 503.

⁶³ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 378.

‘good tidings.’”⁶⁴ This story is about the outreach of God in Jesus. “The gospel itself, as the NT writers understood it, is the divine proclamation of the realization of the final stage of God’s plan of salvation, announced to the whole of mankind. What God himself had promised, and what people had hope and waited for, is now becoming real.”⁶⁵ This redemptive activity has come about in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

⁶⁴ Yee, “Hosea 5:15 – 6:3,” 443.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 444.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Evangelism and Discipleship in the New Testament Church

In order to establish what “A Model for Evangelism and Discipleship for The South Macon District” is and what it should look like, there has to be a base. To extrapolate knowledge or an experience that will lend to the idea that there can be such a phenomenon, there has to be a launching point. Using Acts 2:42-44, I feel a foundation can be brought about as to building a framework to start a discussion. Verse 42, the “apostles’ doctrine,” is mentioned without defining what the apostles’ doctrine is. John M. Powell, in his work, “Heroes of Faith Ministries,” asked the question, “What is the Apostles Doctrine?” He stated, “In its basic terms, the doctrine of the Apostles, or the teaching of the Apostles has its roots in the words and works of Jesus Christ. Doctrine is Teachings, and Teachings is Doctrine!”¹ Further, he shares that every movement has a doctrine, every religion has a doctrine, and the Christian’s doctrine is the Holy Bible (God’s word passed on to His people by the Prophets and Apostles of the Bible).² The Apostles Doctrine, which is the teachings of the Apostles, originated from Jesus who is the Word of God manifest in human flesh. Matter of fact, the entire New Testament is the

¹ John M. Powell, “What is the Apostles Doctrine (based on Acts 2:42),” accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.heroesoffaith.net>.

² Ibid.

Apostles' Doctrine. This is because the Apostles wrote it (with the exception of Mark, Luke and Acts) as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. The Model for Evangelism and Discipleship for the South Macon District" is encapsulated in Acts 2:42-44. Verse 42 will be one of the focuses for this purpose. It is clear that the possibility of evangelizing and discipleship is impossible without "fellowship." The present day church can take a page from the actions of the acts of the Holy Ghost in chapter 4 verses 32-35. Verse 32 in particular states, "And the multitude of them that believed was of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." Fellowship brings people together and when people who believe come together, the possibilities are limitless. Oneness cannot be underestimated; it is the underlying cause for Pentecost fully coming. It was because of their oneness that several nations present at that time heard them in their own language as the Spirit spoke through them. I have always heard that, "What is, has been and what has been, is now." Now they were able to have one heart and one soul in the early church and to have all things common in their time. I am of the opinion that we are not so different from those people of the post-resurrection ministry of Jesus Christ that we, likewise, can experience a level of oneness as well. We can develop mechanism to evangelize and make disciples as did the disciples of Christ during the period of the Acts of the Holy Ghost as recorded in the Book of Acts.

Further, verse 42 states that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. The operative word is "continued." They did not stop! Too often if we do not get the immediate expected result, we feel a spirit of defeat, but we cannot give up when victory or success does not come as

or when we hope. We must persevere continuously and steadfastly. For certainty, as they continued in prayer, we will have to adopt that means by which to engage God in His method of building his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Acts 1:12-14 is a perfect example as to how we are to go about accomplishing the mission of making disciples. They went to the place where the disciples were; they went up into an upper room where abode both Peter, James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, Judas the brother of James. They connected with those who were connected, and in that way, they were empowered to experience the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). However, they “continued” with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. It takes less effort when you connect with the people who have been anointed for the work of evangelism and discipleship. Common, ordinary people took part in this work; even Jesus’ mother Mary was present and playing a role. First of all they continued. They did not stop, and they were on one accord in prayer.

Peter was in jail: Acts 12:5. “Peter, therefore, was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” The visible strength is evident when there is consistency in prayer. Prayer can get you out of prison and prayer can be answered so quickly until it will be unbelievable. A sermon was preached from this text: “Prayer Meeting at Sister Mary’s House.” When Peter knocked at the door, Rhoda could not believe her eyes as to how fast the prayers were answered.

The South Macon District is in a position to usher in all people into the Kingdom of God by simply following and repeating the work and labor of love of the disciples of earlier times.

The book of Acts is a compendium of the gospel of Luke. Just as Jesus evangelized and taught in the gospel narratives, we see a continuation of this work which he charged to his disciples/apostles, in the Acts. The book's name itself, the Acts of the Apostles, captures much of the development of the early church which included preaching, evangelizing and teaching.

Seeds of Evangelism and Discipleship and the New Testament Church

History refers to these acts as the First Missionary Journey of Paul; however, they should be called the missionary journey of the church at Antioch; for it was the church that sent forth Paul and others. All acts of ministry face challenges such as disputes; however, what is of importance here is that of the work of these individuals was in the area of evangelizing and disciplining people. Paul's ministry was about thirty years preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is said that the first decade of his ministry was called the "silent years."³ It is commonly known that he preached in Damascus for a while and spent some time in Arabia (Gal. 1:17-18). He returned to Tarsus and met Barnabas who brought him to Antioch in Syria to help with the ministry of this mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles (Acts 9:26-30; 11:25-26). This was an active time for the Christians in Jerusalem and others who were attempting to escape persecution. In given parts of the region, the church was being built up. Persecution was relaxed to a degree. Paul had flipped the script and had become a Christian. He was converted on the Damascus Road and never looked back on his old ways of persecuting the Christians.

³ *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 1280.

The Sanhedrin had to do damage control and assess their philosophy of how they would continue their effort of stopping the spread of the faith. Many of the Christians did flee from Jerusalem because of the pressure and threat of imprisonment and even death, but they did not wear their faith on their shirt sleeve; their faith was in their hearts. When they fled from the area, they carried their faith with them. This is an extraordinary example for modern day Christians who may experience some difficulty in the worship place of their choice. If you are chased out and away, do not leave your faith behind! The spread of the faith expanded, accelerated and experienced numerical growth even geographically, because of their unwillingness to give in to the powers that be, even in the face of death. God works in a mysterious way. Sometimes we can do more when we are forced out of our comfort zones.

Paul must have arrived at Antioch about AD 43. Scholars are not certain, but they agree that it was around March or April.⁴ Paul's ministry in Antioch was most likely not a new development in his life. Rather, it was apparently simply a geographic transfer of the activities he had already been carrying on in Syria and Cilicia from his home in Tarsus. Paul teamed up with Barnabas being a part of the Diaspora; both were from Tarsus and Cyprus respectively and a formidable pair. They were the initial agents of this mission (Acts 13:1-3). The Church has always been a prayer station and it was no different for Paul and Silas as the church commissioned them to go out as the first "official" missionaries of the church. They were the first according to Luke to become involved in any church's intentional missionary enterprise.

⁴ *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1282.

When these two men set forth on their missionary enterprise, they took John Mark with them (Acts 13:5). The immediate destination of the missionary team was the relatively nearby island of Cyprus, Barnabas's homeland.⁵ They evidently formulated a strategy in that they only focused on the two major cities of Cyprus: Salamis and Paphos the capital. It is my opinion that major cities will assure the most converts; they can only be made where people are. Of course we know that every soul is important. Paul seemingly concentrated on the high and mighty, people of power. The Proconsul Sergius Paulus himself (Acts 13:12) was converted by Paul. He was called Paul for the first time as he invoked his Roman citizenship, primarily because he had the same name as the proconsul. He went after, but not exclusively, people of power, distinction, and intelligence. We are indeed aware in all cases that the overwhelming majority of all converts come from the ranks of ordinary people. The so called mega churches of today do not consist of the rich and famous only; it takes all of us.

The Missionary Journeys of Paul

Undoubtedly, in ministry people will leave you for whatever reason. It happened then and it happens now. Scholars are not definitely sure as to why Mark left the mission team, but Paul was infuriated by the action, feeling that such was inexcusable and his verbalizing this led to the basis of the bitter disagreement between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). One important thing to note in this scenario is the fact that although Mark left the work for a time, he did return and resume the journey with Paul (Acts

⁵ Robert L. Cate, *One Untimely Born: The Life and Ministry of the Apostle Paul* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 59.

15:37). When there is a firm commitment, we may take a break for a time, but when true conversion takes place, it will only be temporary. Mark was very helpful after rejoining Paul. This is the time when the memories of the missionaries' words were no longer sufficient, argued Mark. Because of that, he is believed to have written the first of the four Gospels to leave behind. Actually, that make sense; we need something in our churches of a concrete nature to leave behind, something written to which we can depend upon for guidance and strength when problems or difficulties arise. However, the fact remains that, for whatever reason, Mark left Barnabas and Paul in Perga. Paul was disappointed, saddened, and angered by this "desertion;" yet, he and Barnabas kept on, committed to the task before them.⁶

Paul and Barnabas returned to the mother-church in Jerusalem to bring relief to it. It is felt that the Church at Antioch was the largest established church in existence at that time. When they did return to Antioch, while the faithful were gathered for prayer, fasting, the Holy Ghost, speaking no doubt by the mouth of one of the prophets and teachers who were in the assembly (Acts 13:1-2) said: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them." This is usually known as Paul's First Missionary Journey in AD 45.

It was sometime during this period that Paul took the leadership role. Barnabas was in charge while they labored in Cyprus mainly because they were in his native country. While they were in Rome, however, Paul took over the leadership because of his Roman citizenship. John Mark resented the change in leadership and found an acceptable

⁶ Cate, *One Untimely Born*, 64.

excuse and left them. Leadership changes can be devastating, especially to family members.

Paul, nevertheless, preached that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. He was raised from the dead and in him there is forgiveness of sin. Paul enjoyed tremendous success with his discourse about Jesus. However, it upset some of the members of the orthodox party who swiftly brought an end to their addressing the people in that fashion. It was at this time that Paul made his famous speech, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46).” To add insult to injury, some of the women of Pisidian Antioch, being encouraged by the Jewish “haters,” helped to persuade the town officials to drive them out of town. They visited Iconium and their stay was much like all the others. They greeted them as brothers and friends; they were amazed at their teaching; someone always found a reason to disagree and they were kicked out of town.

A suggestion of Paul’s appearance was shared in a document known as the *Deeds of Paul and Thekla*. “He was a man of small stature, baldheaded, bow-legged, holding himself well, with his eyebrows meeting, and a rather big nose, and full of grace; for at times he looked like a man, and sometimes he had the face of an angel.”⁷

At Lystra there was a man who had been cripple from birth and was unable to walk. This man was greatly moved by Paul’s preaching so much so that Paul, realizing that the man had faith in him, said to him in a loud voice: “Stand upright on thy feet.” At

⁷ Stewart Perowne, *The Journeys of St. Paul* (New York, NY: Hamlyn Limited, 1973), 41.

once the man leaped up and walked. Thus is the story given in Acts 14 as we now have it. Faith-healing is not unknown and irrelevant. It is practiced today in churches all over the world, but not with the impact that it had on those in that day. They called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury, messenger of the gods, because he did most of the speaking.⁸

The House Church

The insight that early Christians met in homes is not new. As early as 1694, C. Vitringa argued that the primitive church patterned itself after house synagogues.⁹ In 1832, N. C. Kist quoted Vitringa in support of his own argument that early Christians met in homes of other affluent members, who in turn acted as its initial leaders.¹⁰ At the turn of the century, W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam drew attention to house churches at Rome.¹¹ J. P. Kirsch made cursory note of the fact that Christians gathered originally in houses without drawing any conclusions regarding their significance.¹² Wieland concluded in his research on the development of the altar that Christian liturgy was already being practiced in private homes during the ministry of the apostles.¹³ Harnack delved deeper than any other scholars before him and recognized that house churches were a factor in the rapid growth, the diversity, and the triumph of the early Christian

⁸ Perowne, *The Journeys of St. Paul*, 43.

⁹ Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

movement.¹⁴ It was not until the discovery of the house in Dura Europos that F. V. Filson (1939) published an article in which he attempted to demonstrate that primitive Christianity would be better understood if more attention were paid to the actual physical conditions under which the first Christians met and lived.¹⁵ Whenever the question of the significance of the physical conditions for the setting of the early Christian gatherings is raised, almost all scholars point to Filson's seminal article.¹⁶ For that reason it seems quite appropriate to briefly summarize his catalogue of observations in order to better evaluate the development of NT research on the house church since 1939.¹⁷ In his article, Filson listed five areas that needed to be considered more carefully in order to deepen our understanding of the early church:

The house church enabled the followers of Jesus to have a distinctively Christian worship and fellowship from the very first days of the apostolic age.

The large part played by the house churches affords a partial explanation of the great attention paid to family life in the letters of Paul and in the other Christian writings. It must not be forgotten that in both Jewish and Gentile life religious observance had been largely centered in the home.

The existence of several houses in one city goes far to explain the tendency to party strife in the apostolic age.

A study of the house church situation also throws light upon the social status of the early Christians.

The development of church polity can never be understood without reference to the house churches. The host of such a group was almost inevitably a man of some education, with a fairly broad background and at least some administrative ability. The house church was the training ground for the Christian leaders who were to build the church after the loss of 'apostolic' guidance, and everything in such a

¹⁴ Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 92.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

situation favored the emergence of the host as the most prominent and influential member of the group.¹⁸

The New Testament speaks of groups of believers meeting regularly in the intimacy of a home rather than a church building. This house church was a Christian fellowship group formed in and/or around a house. Paul speaks of such a church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor 16:19, Rom 16:3, 5), of Philemon (Philemon 1, 2), and of Nympha in Laodicea (Col 4:15). These early churches, however, were not self-serving congregations but bases from where the cities were to be reached. Hence, their purpose was part of enabling the ability to effectively evangelize and make disciples.

It seems clear that the house-church model was a real Christian model, for it was found both within the Jerusalem Christian community and in other communities, including those that Paul established in his missionary efforts.¹⁹ With the book of Acts as the primary source of information on the use of houses in the primitive church in Jerusalem, there were at least two, possibly more, of these in Jerusalem. Acts 1:12-15 depicts the disciples, after Christ's ascension, as returning from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, entering a house whereupon they went into an upper room²⁰ This could be the place where the disciples of Christ and other believers totaling 120 went and shared in community and prayed. There are other practical reasons to suggest that in Jerusalem there were probably a plurality of house churches and not just the two possible ones

¹⁸ Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 3.

¹⁹ Kwabena Donkor, "Ministry International Journal for Pastors," *New Testament House Churches: A Model for Today's Complex World* (April 2008), accessed June 3, 2014, <https://us-mg6.mail.yahoo.com>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

above. Now, if indeed the church grew as fast as the record in Acts 2:41 and 4:4 indicates, then in my opinion the two houses above would not have been adequate for the believers. The power of the house-church setting as an evangelistic strategy should not be missed. Acts 5:42 reports that in the temple and from house to house, the believers kept on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Evangelism and Discipleship in the Middle Age/Medieval Age (5th – 12th Centuries)

Church history is the interpreted record of the origin, process, and impact of Christianity on human society.²¹ Church history studies the remarkable history of the growth of Christianity as a movement in numbers and influence.²² Today the institution founded by Jesus Christ is the largest and most influential religion in the world, despite multiple efforts to stop its spread.²³ A historical, philosophical and scientific study of the growth and development of this movement must examine the claims that its Founder made and the evidence that bears out those claims. They include a declaration that the church would never die and that the Holy Spirit would continue to guide its growth and development in order to save mankind from its sin.²⁴

²¹ “History of Christianity,” accessed June 4, 2014, <http://www.christianity.org>.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Church Development from 30 AD to 500 AD

The first five centuries of Christianity are very important when establishing an exegesis of what the church means and the effects of its early development on the ability to further establish and define itself. The church as a whole and individuals within during the first centuries suffered physical, emotional and spiritual attacks the likes of which can be described as a holocaust against Christianity. The Church withstands and thrives, later attaining great influence and even leadership of the very empire it was born under only 500 years later implies an incredible mechanism of change that was inherent in the original message by Christ that is being preached.²⁵

In the Fifth Century, the need for Christ to be defined and the Word of God to be defended by the church was very great on account of attempts to tear it down through theological alternatives.

At this time the Council of Ephesus attended by 200 Bishops was convened in 431 AD. It addressed the personal unity of Christ, declared Mary the Mother of God, effectively going against Nestorius who was Bishop of Constantinople and founder of Nestorianism an Christological heresy. Saint Patrick (390-460) was a huge force for the missionary effort of the church. Patrick is credited with establishing 300 churches in Ireland and of having converted the population to Christianity as well as bringing written word to Ireland through the promotion of study of legal texts and the Bible.²⁶

In addition to this phenomenon, Charlemagne and other French rulers used their students to establish the centers of learning that became the universities of today. 500 years had passed and the rate at which Christians were being killed for their faith in Christ was astounding with 5,500 a year and a total of 2.5 million. Amongst this the

²⁵ "History of Christianity," 7.

²⁶ Ibid.

scriptures already being established and circulated for centuries were then available in thirteen languages.²⁷ When the Western Roman Empire fell, it is believed that the Middle Ages began. Starting around 476 through 1350 AD, prominent history was made by Europeans: Classical Civilization, the Middle Ages and Modern Civilization. It was a time when the church moved forward with much trepidation because some negative theological interference threatened its smooth continuation because it was the beginning of the creation of denominations which was being brought into the picture. It did some damage to communities that were less well established in the faith because of violence, but by in large and as a whole, it caused the church to band together for its self-protection through the Crusades. Further, in the fifth century, Christianity in Gaul was well over three hundred years old. Clovis, the leader of the Franks, was baptized as a Christian and was successful in baptizing several barbarian tribes between Paris and the Pyrenees. The first territory to be evangelized outside the old Roman boundaries on the Continent was Belgium, Holland, and the coasts of the North Sea inhabited by the Frisians.²⁸ The best known and most successful Anglo-Saxon missionary was Winfrid of Nursling, later known as Boniface, who for thirty years consolidated the existing churches and pushed the frontiers of Christianity north to Scandinavia.²⁹ It should be noted that Boniface began the practice of using women evangelist and was able to establish sixty plus monastic places in Germany. In 772, Charlemagne undertook a campaign against the Saxons in order to win them for Christ by force of arms and through the destruction of

²⁷ "History of Christianity," 8.

²⁸ Paul L. Maier, *The Church from Age to Age: A History from Galilee to Global Christianity* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 262.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

their idols. Missionaries were sent into Westphalia to begin the work of evangelism.³⁰

Notwithstanding, the conversion of the Saxons paved the way for the evangelization of Scandinavia, which opened the way for Ansgar to begin preaching the gospel in Denmark and Sweden.

Now during the course of the eighth century, Christian expansion to the East closely followed the victorious armies of Charlemagne, although the real task of evangelization was left later to Carolingians.³¹ The conversion of Moravia and Bohemia was by two brothers, Cyril and Methodius. They developed a new language and liturgy as teaching devices. Of course, these were pagan nations and the way ~~dogma was~~ presented was differently presented by the Eastern missionaries than from the Westerners. The Eastern missionaries were sent by their rulers whereas in the West, for the most part, they were independent and on their own. Bulgaria was evangelized at the same time as Moravia and Bohemia. Hungary was evangelized by Otto II who negotiated a treaty with the Duke which would permit missionaries to evangelize the area. It is said that Russia came to the Christian faith from Constantinople. In the final analysis, the moral examples and Christian integrity of the missionaries also impressed the pagans. Almost all the biographers of these pioneer evangelists stress the fact that the pagans were won over by their charity, patience, mercy, and superior way of life.³² Willibrord helped beggars. Boniface and Gregory braved warfare, pestilence, and famine with people rather than flee

³⁰ Maier, *The Church from Age to Age*, 265.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 268.

³² *Ibid.*, 274.

to safer territory. Liudger ate with paupers as well as with the rich.³³ It is widely known and accepted that by the beginning of the twelfth century, Christianity had triumphed over paganism in most of Europe.

Evangelism and Discipleship During the Protestant Reformation with Emphases on the Anglican Church

The Church continued to progress through 1000 up to 1500 A.D. Division of the eastern and western churches brought about determined attempts to reform. The Inquisition aided while the battle against the Islamic religion raged on. Pope Urban II, during the First Crusades, recaptured Jerusalem in the 11th century but could not repeat the success in the 12th century.

Still the Church grew and is vibrant because of early tenacity by committed followers of Christ. The Church was able to engage the people in evangelism and was instrumental in disciplining them as well. M. Michael Fink Jr. wrote in an article entitled “Church Libraries and Making Disciples,”

Sometimes the church’s intense desire to win converts overshadows the central issue in the Great Commission – to make disciples. Sometimes when the church focuses on developing believers, it loses focus on evangelism. We should strive to balance these concerns and provide resources that will help people come to know Jesus Christ and to grow in His likeness.³⁴

Fink provides those resources or rather sources to assure transformation. He called it “relationships and experiences.” He refers to and states the matter of creating a

³³ Maier, *The Church from Age to Age*, 274.

³⁴ M. Michael Fink Jr., “Church Libraries and Making Disciples,” accessed on June 2, 2014, <http://www.Lifeway.com/Article/Church-Library-ministry-and-making-disciples>.

comprehensive experience in which people encounter bible truths and apply those truths in their lives. Further he said, we are creating experiences in which people encounter God in all his holiness and majesty and worship him. He said that the ultimate goal is to create relationships.

According to Fink, experiences are short-lived; relationships channel the experiences into enduring connections with people that sustain us between the experiences.³⁵ Someone identified four types of objectives involved in engaging people: to entertain them, to inform them, to persuade them, or to change their behaviors.³⁶ Christian discipleship involves developing a relationship with Jesus Christ and having experiences with Him.

As we enter what is being called a post-Christian era, I sense from my reading a new interest is apparent among Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans in evangelism. Unfortunately, as has been my experience in speaking to laity and clergy, evangelism is understood by some to be growth through and brought about by people coming from another denomination that have already been baptized and gone through all of the rites of discipleship/membership. Denominational proselytizing is not effective nor is it evangelism. Having babies to increase the numbers is not considered evangelism.

Infant baptism testifies to the truths that the faith of the community comes before our faith; that God's action always comes prior to our human response; that Baptism is something we need to grow into; and that faith is a gift that comes through participation in the sacramental life of the community. Adult believers testifies to the truths that baptism, though a sacrament, does not give us something we do not have but makes us aware of something we already have; that God's actions toward us require a moral response and personal acceptance; that our human response needs to be a mature one that is manifested in our lives. Typically, those who defended adult believers' baptism saw no need for

³⁵ Fink, Jr., "Church Libraries and Making Disciples."

³⁶ Ibid.

evangelization. Evangelism alone was satisfactory before Baptism. Those who defended infant baptism also believed in education after Baptism but also tended to neglect evangelism and evangelization. Since we have now arrived at a point where both adult believers and infant baptism are affirmed, and owing to our growing awareness that Christendom, as we have known it, has radically changed, new concern for evangelism and the evangelization for those who have never been baptized is on the rise. Christianity emerged in history as a gift. God chose to act through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to inaugurate God's reign of justice and peace. God called together a community with a mission to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. This was to be practiced through evangelism, they were to be prepared for baptism, a lifelong pilgrimage of personal formation and communal reform and renewal until God's mission was fulfilled.³⁷

The Protestant Reformation was the schism within Western Christianity initiated by Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other early Protestant Reformers. Although there had been significant attempts to reform the Roman Catholic Church before Luther, notably those of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus. The date most usually given for the start of the Protestant Reformation is 1517, when Luther published "The Ninety-Five Theses." Luther started by criticizing the relatively recent practice of selling indulgences. One has to wonder how anyone could ascertain such an outrageous concept as to how to be forgiven of their sins. The Reformation is generally considered to have concluded in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years' War and a wider conflict known as the European wars of religion.³⁸

The new movement influenced the Church of England decisively after 1547 under Edward VI and Elizabeth I, although the national church had been made independent under Henry VIII in the early 1530s for political rather than religious reasons. The different character of the English Reformation came rather from the fact that it was

³⁷ "The History of the Church of England," accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/abouthistory>.

³⁸ Ibid.

driven initially by the political necessities of Henry VIII. Henry had once been a sincere Roman Catholic and had authored a book strongly criticizing Luther, but he later found it expedient and profitable to break with the Papacy. His wife, Catherine of Aragon, bore him only a single child that survived infancy, Mary.³⁹ As England had recently gone through a lengthy dynastic conflict, Henry feared that his lack of a male heir might jeopardize his descendants' claim to the throne. However, Pope Clement VII denied his request for an annulment.⁴⁰ King Henry decided to remove the Church of England from the authority of Rome. It was the Act of Supremacy utilized that made Henry the Supreme Head of the Church of England. When Henry died, he was succeeded by his Protestant son Edward VI. Under Edward VI the reform of the Church of England was established unequivocally in doctrinal terms.⁴¹ From a historical perspective, Christian initiation, characterized by a series of rituals and a process of evangelization to prepare adults for baptism, developed early in the church's history. By the second century it was fully established. However, by the sixth century it was no longer practiced.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the time of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, the language of catechesis diminished among Protestants; and the language of education, with a primary concern for the acquisition of knowledge and skills, evolved. The theological concern became doctrine believing propositional truths. The ethical concern became moral decision making. Both were legitimate ends for

³⁹ "The History of the Church of England," accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/abouthistory>.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁴¹ Ibid., 7.

education, perhaps for better instruction, beginning with children after their Baptism.⁴² It is presently known and widely accepted that 19th-century Roman Catholic missionaries sought a return to earlier expressions of evangelism, evangelization and discipleship making and a new commitment to the Christian initiation of adults. Because of that phenomenon, a new and very much needed interest has arisen among Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans in evangelism and evangelization. Further, as we become increasingly aware that society does not fully support the Christian life of faith, and that there are an increasing number of people who are not disciples of Christ and have not been baptized, a new emphasis on adult converts and the need for evangelization has emerged. Since we have now arrived at a point where both adult believers and infant baptism are affirmed, and owing to our growing awareness that Christendom, as we have known it has radically changed, new concern for evangelism and discipleship making for those who have never been baptized is on the rise. We believe in the African Methodist Episcopal Church that evangelism and discipleship making are the means by which persons develop their faith, character, and consciousness. We believe that Christianity was sent to the earth as a gift. The gift was and is in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. It was through his life, death, and resurrection that God call a community into a mission to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. We believe this can be accomplished through attracting persons to the church through evangelism. Hence the effort of: “A Model for Evangelism and Discipleship for the South Macon District.”

⁴² John H. Westerhff, *Evangelization and Cataphesis: Defining Terms and Making the Case for Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2008), 158, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/delivery?sid=1342996a-489-a040-ff09fde8a334%4>.

Evangelism and Discipleship in the Methodist Tradition in Early America

It is impossible to talk about the Methodist Church without talking about John Wesley. He sought to keep the Methodist Societies within the fellowship of the Church of England. It was members of the Societies who would seek separation from the Church of England. Apparently, sacramental ministry was one of the key issues. The Methodist members thought the Anglican clergy was unworthy of such a sacred responsibility. They wanted to receive the Holy Communion from their own Methodist pastors. That was a major problem because the parish clergy refused to allow the Methodist admission to the sacrament. John Wesley was dedicated to his call and resisted with all of his authority to not leave the Anglican Church. When there was a disagreement, Wesley would allow the persons who disagreed to leave his company with no harsh feelings. He was born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley and had two brothers: Charles and Samuel Wesley. Charles, a sickly man, heard one of his caregivers praying for him; he believed and prayed for those in his house and he felt better. He felt renewed and his music ministry is historic as we sing the hymns written by him in our worship on Sunday mornings. In previous studies of the development of Methodism, I know that John had his heart strangely warmed at Aldersgate and that the smash hit, "O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing," was written about a year after John's heart was strangely warmed. The corollary of Wesley's diagnosis of his need in terms of Bohler's criteria was that, when he found himself trusting in God's pardon that night at Aldersgate, he emerged from the event with great expectations that he would now have continual peace and certainty. These expectations were quickly shattered. Wesley's lack of constant joy, peace, and certainty following Aldersgate left him with a quandary. If faith inherently included these, then he had no

faith.⁴³ On the other hand, he found himself unable to believe that he did not have at least a degree of faith.⁴⁴ Samuel Wesley was a graduate of the University of Oxford and a poet. John and Charles went to Savannah, Georgia, at the request of James Oglethorpe, who was the founder of the colony in 1733. He came in contact with Moravian settlers while in the colonies and was very impressed by their pietism. Charles and a few others had begun to devote themselves to the study of scripture, church attendance, prayer and mutual confession of sin, and to helping people in need. In effect, he discovered the makings of a religious society. Almost immediately, Wesley joined the group, and before long, he was recognized by outsiders as the group's chief leader. Suffice it to say, the recognition was not something to be coveted. Unsure what to make of Wesley and his cohorts, among whom was a young George Whitefield, a number of people began referring to them rather derisively as the Holy Club, the Bible Moths, the Sacramentarians and the Methodists.⁴⁵

For better or worse, the name Methodist eventually stuck. They set a time whereas they tried to serve God every hour of the day. They examined their spiritual lives and fields. At one setting he preached to 3,000; and on another occasion, he preached to 1,000. John and Charles were in America in 1735. Other preachers were already in the states. Two of them were Francis Asbury and Robert Strawbridge. It was Thomas Coke who actually organized the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.⁴⁶ Wesley began to

⁴³ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kings Books, 1994), 125.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁶ Jason E. Vickers, *Wesley: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2009), 12.

focus his time and energies on what would become one of the hallmarks of his life and ministry, namely sermon writing and preaching. One sermon stands out in most circles that know the Wesley story, “The Circumcision of the Heart.” He declined his brother Samuel’s invitation to take over for him as pastor of the Epworth parish, even though Samuel’s health was failing. His family was disappointed to say the least, stating that his services were need at Oxford than at Epworth. The Methodist Episcopal Church, sometimes referred to as the M. E. Church, was a development of the first expression of Methodism in the United States. It officially began at the Baltimore Christmas Conference in 1784.⁴⁷ In 1939, it merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church to form the Methodist Church. In 1968 it merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church to form the present United Methodist Church.⁴⁸

The first General Conference of the new church was held in 1792. In 1830, after controversy over representation in conference and other questions, the Methodist Protestant Church was formed, without bishops or presiding elders. The Wesleyan Methodist Connection was organized in 1834 at Utica, N. Y., in a strong antislavery protest. The independent Methodist Episcopal Church, South, began in 1845 over the issue of slavery. In 1939 a great reunion was realized, the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church united as the Methodist Church. In 1968 the Methodist Church joined with the Evangelical United Brethren Church to form the United Methodist Church, now the largest body of Methodists in the world with about 8.5 million members.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Vickers, *Wesley*, 14.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁹ Methodism: *Methodist in America*, The Columbian Electronic Encyclopedia 6th edition, Columbia University Press, 2012, accessed June 4, 2014, <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/society>.

Present Day Trends in Discipleship in the African Methodist Episcopal Church

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, established formally as a denomination in 1816 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, rapidly expanded from the Middle Atlantic States northeastward to New England and westward to Missouri within its early decades.⁵⁰ Its short-lived presence in South Carolina in the 1820s threatened the slave power and the new denomination was forced to retreat until after the Civil War in 1865. This setback, however, did not affect the founding of churches in the slave states of Kentucky and Louisiana near the end of the 1840s. With the planting of congregations in the Pacific areas in the 1850s, African Methodism was firmly in place in faraway San Francisco and adjacent areas of California.

Neither now nor in the initial years of AME Church expansion was the denomination restricted to American soil. Bishop Richard Allen's endorsement of a mission to Haiti in 1824 and Bishop Morris Brown's welcoming the founding of the Canada Annual Conference in 1840, made African Methodism a religious refuge for persons of color within the western hemisphere. From Haiti, the denomination through the remainder of the 19th century and into the 20th century expanded elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Present Day Trends in Evangelism and Discipleship in the AME Church

"A Model for Evangelism and Discipleship for the South Macon District" is the objective of this effort. The African Methodist Episcopal Church has clearly outlined the

⁵⁰ *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 49th ed. (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union), 34.

mission, vision, purposes and objectives of the church in which this project will seek to minister to the social knowledge, embrace and support whole heartedly the ministry of discipleship and evangelism.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church sees itself involved in not just church activities and programs. Rather, it sees itself engaged in the biblical mandates of Jesus Christ. These sentiments and commitments to ministry are reflected in the church's Historical Preamble.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, whose founders affirmed their humanity in the face of slavery and racism, stands in defense of disadvantaged and oppressed peoples in the 21st century. From the origins in the Free African Society through the involvement of the AME clergy and lay in the Civil War of the 1860's and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's, the AMEC has preached salvation from sin and deliverance from bondage.

This mission expanded to others within the African Diasporas in the Americas, Africa, Caribbean, and Europe. Whether in schools, seminaries, hospitals or social service centers, the AME Church has lived the gospel outside its sanctuaries. This mandate still informs its ministry, vision and mission in the Church's third century of existence.

The Mission: The Mission of the AME Church is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people.

The Vision: At every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the AME Church evolved: that is, to seek out and save the lost, and to serve the needy. It is also the duty of the Church to continue to encourage all members to become involved in all aspects of church training.

The Purposes: The ultimate purposes are: (1) make available God's biblical principles, (2) spread Christ's liberating gospel, and (3) provide continuing programs which will enhance the entire social development of all people.⁵¹

⁵¹ *Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 23.

In order to meet the needs at every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall implement strategies to train all members in: (1) Christian discipleship, (2) Christian leadership, (3) current teaching methods and materials, (4) the history and significance of the AME Church, (5) God's biblical principles, and (6) social development to which all should be applied to daily living.⁵²

⁵² *Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 23.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The South Macon District is the name of the Presiding Elder's District of which I serve as Presiding Elder. It is a part of the Macon Conference of the Sixth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia. In this district there are some glaring circumstances that merit immediate attention from a theological perspective. Acts 2:47 tell us about praising God and having favor with all the people and how the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Well, on the South Macon District there are not many being added daily, weekly or monthly for that matter. The question becomes are there any such as should be saved? The answer is yes. The problem is that there are very few and in between where this is happening. People are not being added to the Christian family on the South Macon District in noticeable, incredible or overwhelming numbers. To me, that is a problem. After all, what is Hosea 6:1-6 and Matthew 28:19-20 designed to do? Something is suppose be to happening because of the words in these texts.

There are many other passages of Scripture that speaks to God's word going out. I am compelled to undertake this project, because I am a vessel and for others to understand that we all must play a role in evangelizing the world and making disciples. The information has to be presented in a form that is easily understood in laymen terms. This is as simple as it gets: "A Model of Evangelism and Discipleship for the South

Macon District.” Therefore, I approach this project with the utmost confidence that it will have a positive outcome according to what the Scriptures says in this regard.

For years we have been hearing that we are living in the last days. We have been hearing that the world is coming to an end at some scientific calculated date that is always a hoax. It frightened those who do not know the scriptures. The world is not coming to an end until God says it is coming to an end. God makes it clear to us in the scriptures. Matthew 24:14 reads, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” How many other nations the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached is impossible for us to know. However, the advantage we are afforded is that we are privileged to have “a charge to keep, a God to glorify, a never dying soul to save and fit it for the sky. To serve the present age my calling to fulfill, O may it all our power engage to do our Master’s will.”¹ We are privileged because we have time to preach where we are to bring God’s Word.

In evaluating and personally being involved in what is expected of the servants of God, and what is literally not being carried out, we are presented with practical situations and a condition as being grounds for taking some immediate actions. The results of this project will not reach everybody. It will not convince fully those who have access to its content and value. It will go unheeded as does many of the things that were wished or hoped would have been attended to at the appropriate time and when it was within reach, time and ability to settle it. Sometimes we simply wait too late.

¹ *The United Methodist Hymnal*, “A Charge To Keep I Have” (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, Press, 1999), 413.

This work will not be presented to prove or disprove anything. It is my assignment to share with the larger population among the South Macon District and beyond the boundaries of our responsibilities as the Presiding Elder. The South Macon District is not the only district that is experiencing and suffering from this problem. I presided over another district prior to being appointed to the SMD, and the same situation was occurring. Not many people were becoming disciples of Christ. Matter of fact, only twelve in one whole year became disciples of Christ. There were twenty nine churches and twenty five pastors, and only twelve persons became disciples of Christ. Something is wrong with that picture. Jesus only chose twelve to be his disciples. He put it in our hands to go make others. I presided over the district for nine and one half years; and for all of that time, evangelism and discipleship were not meaningfully and effectively practiced. I know that I must take some responsibility for this lack of successful kingdom coming on earth; and I do take responsibility. This project will serve as a reprieve, a second chance, to get it right with the outcome being what God intended from the outset.

In the Biblical Foundation unit I explored the Old Testament and New Testament texts in support of the theme. In the Historical Foundation, I have traced the effects of discipleship and evangelism throughout periods of history. In this Theological Foundation, I will explore what theologians have said about these two texts along with their theologies of evangelism and discipleship.

In the Biblical Foundation chapter, it is stated that the primary call of people of faith is to respond to the overtures of God. As mentioned above, the “kingdom of God” is inevitably the whole matter that is being considered and the work of evangelism and

discipleship is inextricably interwoven into the fabric of kingdom building on earth as it is in heaven. Again, by way of definition,

The kingdom means the sovereign, righteous rule of God. It is a rule in which power and goodness, judgment and mercy are combined. The goal of the kingdom is directed toward a redeemed society of persons. The kingdom as God's rule is present but points forward: 'thy kingdom come.' To sum it up, the kingdom of God is our ultimate challenge and our ultimate hope. Thus, it is not surprising that Jesus found in it his central message. It remains for us to discover, to declare and to live by all that is good and true in what the term implies.²

Further, in a way of reflection, the Biblical Foundation unit expresses that evangelism was indeed a part of the Old Testament, but in an extraordinary way. Evangelism in the Old Testament was the way of life for a special called-out people. To live in such a way that the whole world would become so in enamored because of the comfort and peace in which these people lived, despite the conflict and hatred exhibited toward them, was too much to go unnoticed by even their worst enemies.

As it relates to my own Wesleyan tradition, Methodism, under the direction of John Wesley, became a focal point by which evangelism and disciples began to take shape in the denominational arena. Although Methodism went through tremendous struggle, it emerged as one of the most resilient of all the fellowships that began but faltered along the way. African Methodism is still vibrant and relevant in the evangelism and discipleship-making role.

² Georgia Harkness, *Understanding the Kingdom of God* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1974), 53-55.

The Theology of Christology in Evangelism and Discipleship

Christology is the process of interpreting one's faith-experience of God, alive for us, in and through Jesus, the Christ.³ In the book *Christology: Memory, Inquiry, Practice*, Anne M. Clifford and Anthony J. Godzieba wrote, "I want to explore these questions by sketching discipleship as a focus or starting point from which to understand Jesus of Nazareth as the absolute meaning of life for the world."⁴ This topic, discipleship as a Christological focus, can make no claim to novelty; it forms a conspicuous strand in Christian tradition.⁵

Scholars suggest that the word disciple appears rarely in the Hebrew Scriptures, but its usage was part of the fabric of the ancient world. However, in the gospel narratives, Jesus of Nazareth invests the relationship of teacher and disciple with new and remarkable meaning. For, rather than appeal solely to the acquired knowledge and presumptive authority, conventional prerogatives of the rabbi, Jesus invites and nurtures in His disciples faith in who He is and in the good news He is sent to proclaim. Yet, Jesus tests their faith: to follow the way He teaches requires that Jesus' disciples take up a new and different way of being in and for the world. Thus, they face a commanding and paradoxical challenge: 'If they want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'⁶

A Model for Evangelism and Discipleship for the South Macon District cannot be complete without some brief discussion about the effects of Christology. Clifford and Godzieba describe discipleship as focus or starting point from which to understand Jesus as the absolute meaning of life for the world. Confusion, frustration, depression, aggravation, intimidation, insanity and even worse are the clarion cry around the world.

³ Gerard H. Luttenberger, *Who Do You Say That I Am? An Introduction to Christology* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 12.

⁴ Anne M. Clifford, and Anthony J. Godzieba, *Christology: Memory, Inquiry, Practice*, vol. 48, Annual Publication of the College Theology Society (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 178.

⁵ Ibid., 178.

⁶ Ibid.

Meaningful answers are being sought for relief among every population of humanity: secular and religious. All the places being explored for the answers are proving to be fruitless. Alcoholism, drug addiction, becoming sexual predators, sex addicts, embezzling and the list goes on and on. It is a known fact that, if a human nation is not getting its needs met, human beings act out in ways that is meant to attract attention to be noticed by someone presumed is a person with the means to give them relief. Basically, the world is screaming for this attention. Ultimately, people will seek help for deliverance from emotional horrors they live in.

I appreciate what Clifford and Godzieba said in regard to discipleship and evangelism.

Yet, Jesus tests their faith: to follow the way he teaches requires that Jesus' disciples take up a new and different way of being in and for the world. Thus, they face a commanding and paradoxical challenge: 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?'⁷

In order for the world of humanity to look and be seen in its true identity, it must work through this challenging and paradoxical undertaking. The problem is illuminated even the more when we take a look at what Clifford and Godzieba said, "To live as Jesus' disciple means to live at the disposal of the cross: exposed, vulnerable, open to the wisdom and power and love of God. A lived response to Jesus' call requires a praxis of solidarity and compassion as well as surrender to the startling embrace of Divine Love."⁸

⁷ Clifford, and Godzieba, *Christology: Memory, Inquiry, Practice*, 178.

⁸ Ibid.

The South Macon District is faced with a difficult assignment. Trying to convince the rich, the poor, and the deprived to give up their possessions to follow an unseen Jesus is unthinkable. But if you look at it from another perspective, it is tenable. For example: The prosperous builder and the successful military strategist meet their goals through painstaking attention to details, thorough planning, and meticulous assessment. The outcomes of such exacting preparation earn admiration. Therefore, from a Christological view point, as giving support to the effort to this: “A Model for Evangelism and Discipleship for the South Macon District,” this absolute endeavor calls not merely for planning, self-examination, sacrifice, and personal resolve, but for love unmeasured, unstinting, over-flowing, and fearless passion.

The Theology of Pneumatology in Evangelism and Discipleship

Pneumatology is the person and work of the Holy Spirit.⁹ The promise of evangelism and discipleship is cited in all three gospels in quoting John the Baptist saying, “Christ will baptize with the Holy Ghost” (Mark 1:8; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). Matthew and Luke speak of “Spirit and fire.” This, as the context shows, is a symbol of judgment and point to the similar combination in Isaiah 4:4. Similarly, all three report Jesus’ own assurance to the disciples that when they are on trial, the Spirit will tell them what to say (Mk 13:11; Mt 10:20; Lk 12:12). This assurance is also from John the Baptist stating that Jesus would baptize the disciples with a power that would empower them to do all that was needed to bring about the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. Further,

⁹ Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible, the History of Christian Thought, and Recent Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1983), 31.

they would never be at loss for words no matter what type of issue confronted them at any time. The Holy Ghost had their back. They could not lose; they could not fail; and they would always be victorious. In addition, Luke emphasizes that Jesus' whole ministry is empowered by the Spirit. After the temptation he returns in the power of the Spirit to Galilee (4:14) and begins his preaching in Nazareth by quoting Isaiah 61:1-2: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . ." (4:18). The *pneuma* was the driving force even for Jesus' work and service on earth for the kingdom to come and for God's will to be done. Evangelism and discipleship are certainly that median that is undergirded by the Holy Ghost and is given direction and instruction to fulfill the particular mission ordained by God. Evangelizing and making disciples of the world is possible because the means by which to do so has been and is present and available for our use.

Central to Luke's pneumatology is the account of Pentecost in Acts 2. Here, the greatest space is given, not to the dramatic events, the rushing wind, the tongues of fire, and the speaking in many languages, but to Peter's sermon (2:14-36); and the climax of the whole chapter comes in the words with which that sermon ends: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."¹⁰ Of course, we know the impact of the sermon delivered by Peter: many souls were added to the church.

In other words, there was a time set for the purpose of evangelizing and making disciples of the whole world from then and going forward. Togetherness, however, is the key to the overall success of this "thy kingdom come" work. This is the day of Pentecost which is noted in the Christian Church as the day on which the Spirit descended upon the

¹⁰ Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, 42.

apostles, and on which, under Peter's preaching, so many thousands were converted in Jerusalem (Acts 2). Everyone present was endowed with this power from God, so much so, that they were able to speak languages that they had not been taught or studied to learn. It was a gift given to them, for the purpose of fulfilling the mission and purpose of God on earth among humanity. Those present were filled with the Holy Ghost as they communed together in peace and harmony. Some insisted that they were filled with other substances, but that was immediately refuted, in that Peter told all present that they were not drunk! The new outpouring of the Spirit has been made possible only through his death and resurrection.¹¹ The Spirit came on him from the Father (the dove); it comes to his followers/disciples through him. The disciples had the necessary empowerment to achieve the commission given them by Jesus. Is it available for us today?

This connection of the Spirit with the church, it may be added, is quite fundamental, so far as Acts is concerned. It is in the church that it is at work, and through the church's mission that it comes upon others. Its authority can be invoked for decisions made by the church's leaders (15:28), and to lie to them is to attempt to deceive the Spirit, which brings fearful retribution on Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11). The Spirit is certainly not the church's possession, but God's gift, as the tale of Simon Magus illustrates (8:20). The Christian community lives by that gift, not by its own inherent power. But the gift is given, and given in the church rather than elsewhere. The Spirit is seen in terms of the Old Testament promise, the receiving and giving of it by Jesus Christ, and its continuing activity in the church, which has replaced the old Israel.¹²

The twenty-one churches in the South Macon District have to have the presence of this power. The building is not the conduit through which this power can be permeated into the world or rather into the people.

¹¹ Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, 42.

¹² *Ibid.*, 44.

Pneumatology, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, is at work in and through us, the called out. The work and person of the Holy Spirit is in us. There is no excuse for not fulfilling the Great Commission because God has seen to it that we have all the necessary means by which to achieve all that he has created us to accomplish for his sake.

Soteriology in Relationship to Evangelism and Discipleship

Soteriology is the study of religious doctrines of salvation.¹³ Soteriology is understood by scholars as representing a key theme in a number of different religions and is often studied in a comparative context; that is comparing various ideas about what salvation is and how it is obtained.¹⁴ I will not explore the various other religions and how they speak to the salvation process, but will narrow the scope to Christianity and how it addresses salvation in its context. Mainstream Christian soteriology is the study of how God reconciles the separation between man and God due to sin.¹⁵ I will venture to say that many Christians believe they receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation obtained by Jesus through his incarnation, life, innocent suffering, death, resurrection from the dead, and ascension. As I see it, Christian soteriology examines how an individual is miraculously saved by divine grace through faith in Jesus Christ and reconciled to God. That is the whole crux of the matter. The only thing that is left out is the witnessing to every creature/person on earth and that is going to happen.

¹³ E. C. Bragg, *Systematic Theology Soteriology*, accessed June 4, 2014, <http://www.trinitycollege.edu/assets/files/ECBragg/SoteriologyR.pdf>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Traditional Christian thinking has generally held that humanity, having sinned, is destined to eternal death in hell, and that only those who accept the testament of Jesus Christ as forgiveness for their sin shall receive eternal life in heaven. Richard Bauckham, a biblical scholar, stated, “Almost all Christian theologians taught the reality of eternal torment in hell through history up until the nineteenth century.”¹⁶ There are related scriptural references in John 3:36 and Thessalonians 1:8-9. How correct or incorrect is Bauckham in this regard? We certainly cannot argue with the scripture. It is too risky to even have a debate over it; it is too critical for such unnecessary dialogue. Atheist and agnostics only are engaged in those kinds of discussions. Now, in terms of theological study, this has led to long running debates over what is known as “the problem of hell.”¹⁷ I believe that hell is a problem and that is why I am trying to avoid, escape, and miss it. The world is the path that leads to hell. Romans 12:2 declares, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

This is the golden opportunity that every human being needs and hopefully is longing for. We are sent to help each other to fully understand that we are not of this world. While we are here, it is just an activity of obedience or disobedience. It is a personal choice with all of the options available to help with the final decision. When we are being hated, that is an indication that a decision has been made on the part of an individual who has a worldly mentality. Their mind has not been renewed. Jesus guards

¹⁶ John McIntyre, *Shape of Soteriology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Death of Christ* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1992), 5.

¹⁷ David A. Fisher, “The Question of Universal Salvation: Will All Be Saved?” *The Maronite Voice*, vii, No. xi, December 1, 2014.

us and equips us to guard each other. Jesus depends on God to keep us from the evil one. Those who prefer not to be kept by Jesus find themselves confounded of the evil one and sometimes by choice. We have been sanctified in truth in the word and the truth is not a lie. We have the word that has to be given to the world through the South Macon District and all other districts, and also the means and modes of getting the gospel to the world.

Yet in light of all this, many people have expressed reservations that God would condemn almost all of humanity to hell even if this is explicitly stated in the bible multiple times because it seems to contradict the concept of a good, benevolent God. Verses that seem to contradict the larger tradition of complete damnation come up in arguments, such as Lamentations 3:31-33 (NIV), “For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love,” and Timothy 4:10 (NIV), “We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.”¹⁸

A minority of Christian thinkers have held the view that God will eventually gather all or almost all human beings to him, a viewpoint known as ‘universal reconciliation.’ Prominent examples include Kallistos Ware, a Greek Orthodox bishop and retired University of Oxford theologian who states that many of the Fathers of the Church postulated the idea of salvation for all, and Saint Silouan of Mt. Athos, who argued that the compassion and love of those in heaven and on earth will extend to eliminating suffering even in hell. In terms of Biblical citations, Father David A. Fisher, Pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Maronite Church and professor of philosophy at Ohio Central State University, has argued that total reconciliation seems to arise from the First Epistle to the Corinthians such as 1 Corinthians 15:22, ‘As all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ,’ and 1 Corinthians 15:28, ‘God will be all in all.’ University of Oxford historian and writer C. S. Lewis, while not supporting the idea of total reconciliation completely, hypothesized in books such as *The Great Divorce* that

¹⁸ Richard Bauckham, *Universalism: a historical survey*, *Themelios* 4.2 (September 1978): 47-54.

souls that enter an unhappy state after death can, even then, recognize the lessons of their past life and chose to ascend to heaven.¹⁹

All of the aforementioned viewpoints are generally rejected by traditional Christianity as held by Christian organized religion and have been opposed by mainstream Christian scholars throughout history.

The theologians possibly did not consider Matthew 25:32-34, 41 which speaks to damnation and eternal life. There will be some separation between different character traits. The blessed of the Father and the cursed have destinations that are enormously varied.

Kallistos Ware, the Greek Orthodox bishop, could have been referring to the text in Revelation 20:4-10 when he made that suggestion. Now this text starts out by saying,

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received [his] mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection. Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom [is] as the sand of the sea. (Rev 20:4-10)

Ware's universal reconciliation theory is probably not valid at this point because at this juncture there are no second chances. All of the previous opportunities have been exhausted, squandered away. They are simply out of time. There are no reprieves: it is over.

¹⁹ Bible Gateway, "Second Thessalonians," accessed June 4, 2014, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Thessalonians+1%3A7-9&version=NIV>

Soteriology, the work of salvation, the doctrine of Christian life -- grace, justification, regeneration and sanctification -- according to Eerdmans Guides to Theology Series in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, gives a dying world every opportunity to conform to the path that leads to the creative genius in the plan for restoration and reconciliation. In addition to that there is eternal bliss with the one who orchestrated the entire adventure.

To bring this concept to the masses is the overall objective, so that humanity's work for the kingdom of God on earth will be acknowledged by the organizer and will be acceptable according to His resoluteness. There can be no other way. We certainly do not have the capacity to steer the course of time and history. It is only God that is the progenitor of time and history.²⁰

Eschatology in Relation to Evangelism and Discipleship

In chapter one of his book, *Eschatology and Hope*, Anthony Kelly opens the chapter with a discussion of "The World of Hope."

Hope in all its registers implies a trustful and confident movement toward the future. It is trustful, for it is relying on something or someone for the help that is needed. There is confidence, too: whatever the evils that threaten, hope anticipates an escape or release into a fuller dimension of life. It is always about a movement forward. While it is not always easy to find words for what we are hoping for, at the very least hope is moving from despair to something more positive. It shows a certain defiance: the future has to be more than the present situation of suffering or incompleteness. It might even extend to everything and everyone. In that case, it outstrips what can be controlled and planned for, and senses, however implicitly, that, hidden in the present, there is a promise that can and will be kept.²¹

²⁰ Anthony Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

Hope for the world is the center of this overall project. But hope seems to be becoming a nonrenewable resource. It seems, however, that trust is dwindling. Good news is far and in between.

I like what Anthony Kelly said as he mentions “cultural and social dislocation.” He suggest that promotion of human rights remains one of the noblest carriers of hope for a community of justice and personal dignity. Yet, even this can be imperiled.²² This is the perfect description of our society. Our culture is all interwoven with other life styles that do not resemble the original plan for right living according to the scriptures. Micah 6:8 reminds us, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Socially, we are likewise dislocated. Race relations are not getting any better. President Barack H. Obama delivered a statement on Ferguson, Missouri, and the unrest there. This was going to be a subject of intense disagreement not only in Ferguson but across America. So I want to just say a few words suggesting how we might move forward. Finally, we need to recognize that the situation in Ferguson speaks to broader challenges that we face as a nation. The fact is, in too many parts of this country, a deep distrust exists between law enforcement and communities of color. Some of this is the result of the legacy of racial discrimination in this country. And this is tragic because nobody needs good policing more than poor communities with higher crime rates. The good news is we know there are things we can do to help.

²² Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 2.

Ecclesiology as Playing a Role in Evangelism and Discipleship

Ecclesiology usually now refers to the theological study of the Christian Church.

The word was an English neologism of the later 1830's, however; and, within a few years, it was defined as the science of the building and decoration of church buildings. It may still be used today. Ecclesiology is the study of the church. The word ecclesiology comes from two Greek words meaning "assembly" and "word" combining to mean "the study of the church." The church is the assembly of believers who belong to God. In my estimation, ecclesiology is crucial to understanding God's purpose for believers in the world today from an evangelistic and discipleship making perspective. In other words, why would an individual have a desire to have a relationship with any entity that they do not understand? Family members and co-workers, along with others, avoid each other because they do not understand the behavior of persons they have interaction with from time to time. What then is the church?

Many people today understand the church to be a building. This is not the biblical understanding of the church. The root meaning of "church" is not that of a building, but of people. What is the purpose of the church? According to Scripture, the purposes/activities of the church should be: (1) teaching Biblical doctrine, (2) providing a place of fellowship for believers, (3) observing the LORD's supper, and (4) praying.

Ecclesiology helps us to understand the role of the church and our role in the church. It teaches us about the ordinances of the church, how church leadership is to be chosen and structured, and what the church is to be doing in regards to believers (worship and discipleship) and unbelievers (ministry and evangelism). A Biblical understanding of Ecclesiology would go a long way to correct many of the common problems in churches today. Above all, we must understand that the church is the Body of Christ and that each of us has a specific function and role within that body. A key Scripture on Ecclesiology is Acts 2:42, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."²³

²³ Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope*, 2.

The church plays a significant role in ushering in the Kingdom of GOD on earth as it is in Heaven through evangelism and discipleship making. There is no church unless there is evangelism and disciples that make up the church. Veli-Matti Karkkainen book, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*, supports the premise that disciples have to be brought in, trained and sent out to make other disciples, and this is called evangelism. Mr. Karkkainen mentions several characteristics of Eastern ecclesiology: First, the church is seen as the image of the Trinity.²⁴ Just as each person is made according to the image of the Trinity, so the church as a whole is an icon of the Trinity, “reproducing on earth the mystery of unity in diversity.”²⁵ Not only is the church as such the image of the Trinity, but in Eastern thinking even other social institutions may be as well: the family, the school, the workshop, the parish, the church universal.²⁶ Of course, we know that in the Trinity, the three are one God, yet each is fully their own individual person. Well, in the church a multitude of human beings are in fellowship and communion with each other formulating a group that becomes one. For example, in St. John A.ME Church, everyone in that church is under the banner of St. John AMEC and are known as disciples of Christ of that church, not that name and some other name. It is one church at a particular address with people who have the responsibility of the specific assignment of GOD for that church/people. One people, one mission and purpose united in

²⁴ Karkkainen, Veli-Matti. *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 19

²⁵ Ibid., 20.

²⁶ Ibid., 20.

²⁹ Ibid., 20.

one for the work of the kingdom. Now the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity is paralleled by the co inherence of the members of the church.²⁷

This principle of “unity in diversity” means that just as each person of the Trinity is autonomous, so the church is made up of a number of independent, yet related autocephalous churches. On the other hand, just as in the Trinity the persons are equal, so in the church no one bishop can claim to wield absolute power over all the rest. There is also a vivid consciousness of community: ‘We know that when any of us falls, he falls alone; but no one is saved alone. He is saved in the Church, as a member of it and in union with all its other members.’²⁹

The ‘spiritual way,’ as the journey of the Christian is often called, presupposes that individuals come together and join in community. The journey is undertaken in fellowship with others, not in isolation. The Orthodox tradition is intensely conscious of the ecclesial character of all true Christians. At the very core of Orthodox theology in general and ecclesiology in particular is the relation of humanity to creation as a whole, the cosmos. The church is described in cosmological terms. In this understanding the church is the center of the universe, the sphere in which its destinies are determined. Eschatologically, at a given moment when the church has attained to the fullness of growth determined by the will of God, the eternal world, having used up its vital resources, will perish. The church is also necessary since all the conditions required for us to attain union with God are given in the church. It is the church that human beings are restored to their original role as cocreators with God.²⁸

That is profoundly where evangelism and disciples are most urgently essential. Humanity has drifted so far from the original place with God that the path back to where we should be is barely recognizable. The church is vital to the salvation of humanity. It has to be an incredible push in this 21st century for us to get back on course. Although human beings are not privy to the times that God has ordained in his power to bring the cosmos along with everything else to destiny, we cannot afford to take any further risks. No one needs to be on the wrong side of destiny as it relates to what God has determined in his wisdom and power for the cosmos in general and humanity specifically. As crime, hatred, murder,

²⁸ Veli-Matti, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 20.

illegal and unlawful acts are committed against the ordinances of God, they are causing humanity to spiral into a state of panic, confusion, frustration and hopelessness. The job market is unsteady, economics are difficult to come by and even more difficult to hold on to. That being the case, it is understood that without money it is hard to live in the fashion that we would like or are accustomed to living. That is reason enough to be filled with anxiety and fear. The church because of the ministries of evangelism and disciples has a marvelous opportunity to ward off certain destruction of a large segment of humanity and fulfill the Great Commission based on Matthew 28:19-20.

To give further credence to the well-founded assumption that the church is indeed the vehicle by which humanity and the world can and must be evangelized and become Disciples of Christ is through the church. Gerard Mannion, in his book *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time*, under the caption “Church in Our Time: Introducing the Themes and Concerns” said, “The church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.”²⁹

²⁹ Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 3.

Last Things/New Creation (Eschatology)

In other words, hope is expressed as “eschatology.” This suggests an exploration of what is termed in Greek *eschaton* (the final reality) or *eschata*, the plural form, “the last thing.”³⁰ This is the direction we are headed. I do not know whether the end is in sight or not, but every indication suggests that we are on course for some type of concluding matters. It is either of our own doing or by the hands of someone who controls time, life, death and all aspects of being. We know that to be the power of God. It seems to me that if we know that we are headed to a place of no return, we would put forth efforts to make adjustments in our actions to avoid the inevitable total destruction. That is, if we have the slightest inkling that we are going to collide with something that will alter our existence as we know it for an indefinite period of time or permanently/eternally, we should seek out the source which can assist in changing our plight.

James A. Borland, in the book *Looking into the Future* under the caption, “The Meaning and Identification of God’s Eschatological Trumpets,” writes, “These trumpets frequently play a role in establishing one’s chronology of the end-times, especially in the debate between pre-and post-tribulation rapture proponents.”³¹ This trumpet was used as a signaling instrument.³² As I understand it, the function of the trumpet and also called the sopar, was to make noise, either earthly or of eschatological character, but not to make music. Now since this instrument/horn was used for signaling the events in which they

³⁰ Gerard, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 21.

³¹ David W. Baker, *Looking Into The Future: Evangelical Studies In Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 23.

³² *Ibid.*, 63.

were used, it should be noted. The very first *sopar* that we read of is God's trumpet in Exodus 19:11. The occasion was rather spectacular. The eyewitness, Moses, records, "Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thundering and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled" (Ex 19:16, NKJV). This was the first reference to trumpet God's terrifying blast to signal his approach to meet his people at Sinai. That is the purpose of this project. The South Macon District must sound the trumpet of the oncoming acts of God that will affect us through all eternity. Many trumpet blasts were actually a summons of one sort or another. Moses was to use the trumpet to call Israel to gather at the tabernacle in the wilderness (Num 10:4), and even to summon God's aid against their enemies (Num 10:9). From every indication, much as the air-raid siren is used today, the *sopar* was used in bible times to signal an alarm.

Trumpets alerted people to the danger of an enemy attack. It is fairly evident that there are several Old Testament uses of trumpet that are clearly eschatological in meaning. God will lift up the banner, the ensign, and blow the trumpet in Isaiah 18:3 in recovering Israel. It is interesting, and likely significant, that God will signal the re-gathering of his people by the use of a great trumpet. Whether it will be heard by everyone on earth or not, the image used in this eschatological setting is the trumpet. Jeremiah's notable prophecy of the future doom of Babylon says, "Set up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, and call together against her the kingdom" (Jer. 51:27). It is clear that the Old Testament *sopar* was used as a signaling instrument in various aspects of civilian, military, and religious life of the people.

This is the duty of all the preachers of the gospel. We have to sound the trumpet of truth to a dying world. It is certainly my greatest hope that as many as can will follow the mandates of Matthew 28:19-20 and evangelize to make disciples for Christ before it is too late.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

As I approach this phase of the writing aspect of the project, let me first observe an attempt to embellish this evangelism and discipleship in the context of “theories of learning.” In psychology and education, learning is commonly defined as a process that brings together cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in one’s knowledge, skills, values, and world views.¹

Here I think it is important to discover how theories of learning play out in psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology. Now, learning as a process focuses on what happens when the learning takes place. Explanations of what happens constitute learning theories. A learning theory is an attempt to describe how people and animals learn, thereby helping us understand the inherently complex process of learning. Learning theories have two chief values. One is in providing us with vocabulary and a conceptual framework for interpreting the examples of learning that we observe. The other is in suggesting where to look for solutions to practical problems. The theories do not give us solutions, but they do direct our attention to those variables that are crucial in finding solutions. Psychology of religion consists of the application of psychological

¹ Robert E. Slavin, *Educational Psychology: Theory and Practice*, 10th ed. (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2012), 34.

methods and interpretive frameworks to religious traditions, as well as to both religious and irreligious individuals. The science attempts to accurately describe the details, origins, and uses of religious beliefs and behaviors. Although, the psychology of religion first arose as a self-conscious discipline as recently as the late 19th century, all three of these tasks have a history going back many centuries before that.²

Many areas of religion remain unexplored by psychology. While religion and spirituality play a role in many people's lives, it is uncertain how they lead to outcomes that are at times positive and at other times negative. Thus, the pathways and outcomes that underlie these associations need additional research.³

In the last several decades, especially among clinical psychologists, a preference for the terms 'spirituality' and 'spiritual' has emerged, along with efforts to distinguish them from 'religion' and 'religious.' Especially in the United States, religion has for many become associated with sectarian institutions and their obligatory creeds and rituals, thus giving the word a negative cast; 'spirituality,' in contrast, is positively constructed as deeply individual and subjective, as a universal capacity to apprehend and accord one's life with higher realities. In fact, 'spirituality' has likewise undergone an evolution in the West, from a time when it was essentially a synonym for religion in its original, subjective meaning. Today, efforts are ongoing to 'operationalize' these terms, with little regard for their history in their Western context and with the apparent realist assumption that underlying them are fixed qualities identifiable by means of empirical procedures.⁴

Sociology of religion asked the question "What is a prophet?" from the perspective of sociology. We shall forego here any consideration of the general question regarding the "bringer of salvation, whether external or internal salvation. And certainly not every

² Jesse Russell and Ronald Cohn, *Psychology of Religion* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Lennex Corp, 2012), 5.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

provider of salvation became a god or even a savior, although such phenomena were widespread.”⁵

We shall understand “prophet” to mean a purely individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment. No radical distinction will be drawn between a “renewer of religion” who preaches an older revelation, actual or supposititious, and a “founder of religion” who claims to bring completely new deliverances.⁶ The two types merge into one another. In any case, the formation of a new religious community need not be the result of doctrinal preaching by prophets, since it may be produced by the activities of non-prophetic reformers.⁷ Nor shall we be concerned in this context with the question whether the followers of a prophet are more attracted to his person, as in the cases of Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammad, or to his doctrine, as the cases of Buddha and the prophets of Israel.⁸

On the other hand, it was only under very unusual circumstances that a prophet succeeded in establishing his authority without charismatic authentication, which in doctrine practically always needed such validation must not be forgotten for an instant that the entire basis of Jesus’ own legitimation, as well as his claim that he and only he knew the Father and that the way to God led through faith in him alone, was the magical charisma he felt within himself. It was doubtless this consciousness of power, more than anything else that enabled him to traverse the road of the prophets. During the apostolic period of early Christianity and thereafter the figure of the wandering prophet was a constant phenomenon. There was always required of such prophets a proof of their possession of particular gifts of the spirit, of special magical or ecstatic abilities.⁹

⁵ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993), 46.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁹ Ibid., 47.

Cultural Anthropology

Cultural Anthropology can be recognized in theories of learning in that cultural anthropology is not a cure-all for missions. It is just one tool of a well-prepared missionary.¹⁰ No real missionary work takes place apart from the Holy Spirit.¹¹ However, many Christians misunderstand the role and place cultural anthropology can have in effective ministry. There is a simple rule that applies to everything. In elementary physics we learn that an object that is heavier than the water it displaces will sink. In order for a boat or an object to float, it must be built in keeping with the laws of nature. The same principle applies to presenting the gospel to people of another culture. We do not expect God to overrule when we go against natural laws. Why do we expect him to overrule when we go against cultural or behavioral laws?

It is accepted that where there is an order to and in nature, so there is an underlying order in human behavior. The behavioral sciences seek to understand the order of human behavior and the natural sciences are concerned with discovering the order of nature. With that being said, the missionary who uses cultural anthropology as a tool in developing a missionary strategy is not trying to work apart from the Holy Spirit but in harmony with Him.¹²

As we have said, cultural anthropology is not a cure-all for missions nor a human effort working apart from the Holy Spirit. What then is the role of cultural anthropology

¹⁰ Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 47.

¹¹ Stephen A. Grunlan and Marvin K. Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, 20.

in mission? Cultural anthropology may contribute in at least four ways to an effective missionary strategy:

1. It gives the missionary understanding of another culture.
2. It aids the missionary in entering another culture.
3. It facilitates the communicating of the gospel in another culture.
4. It aids in the process of planting the church in another culture.¹³

Now the theory of learning in the context of Christian education has a roll that it plays in the church through Christian education programs:

(1.) The Department of Christian Education shall develop a comprehensive and unified program of Christian Education which shall lead to a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the Christian Religion, and the Christian Church, and an implementation of these values in daily living.

(2.) The department shall provide source materials for all the educational work of the church and shall provide for developing standards and preparing programs and offering techniques of Christian Education in the local and general Church in accordance with the provisions set forth in *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*.¹⁴

Department of Christian Education

Service Agencies

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Church School Promotion * Youth Ministries * Allen Christian Fellowship * Audio-Visual Education * Campus Religious Life * Sons of Allen * Girl Scouts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Children's Work * Christian Family Life * Christian Stewardship * Vacation and Week Day Church * Richard Allen Young Adult Council * Boy Scouts * ¹⁵ |
|--|---|

¹³ Grunlan and Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology*, 21.

¹⁴ *The Doctrine And Discipline Of The African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 168.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Doctrinal Affirmation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

The mission, vision, purposes and objectives of the church is presented in the Historical Preamble of the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Book of Discipline*.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, whose founders affirmed their humanity in the face of slavery and racism, stands in defense of disadvantaged and oppressed peoples in the 21st. century. From the origins in the Free African Society through the involvement of the AME clergy and lay in the Civil War of the 1860's and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's, the AMEC has preached salvation from sin and deliverance from bondage. The mission expanded to others within the African Diasporas in the Americas, Africa, Caribbean, and Europe. Whether in schools, seminaries, hospitals or social service centers, the AME Church has lived the gospel outside its sanctuaries. This mandate still informs its ministry, vision and mission in the Church's third century of existence.¹⁶

The Mission: The Mission of the AME Church is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people.

The Vision: To seek out and save the lost and to serve the needy.

The Purpose: Make available God's biblical principles; Spread Christ's liberating gospel; Provide continuing programs which will enhance the entire social development of all people.

The Objectives: In order to meet the needs at every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall implement strategies to train all members in: (1) Christian disciples, (2) Christian leadership, (3) current teaching methods and material, (4) the history and significance of the AME Church, (5) God's biblical principles, and (6) social development to which all should be applied to daily living.¹⁷

This project, "A Model of Evangelism and Discipleship for the Macon South District," was conceptualized because of the oppressive state of the people of God.

Thom S. Rainer wrote a book, and in this book he titled chapter six: "The Great Commission Becomes the Great Omission." I am certain that when many of the churches

¹⁶ *The Doctrine And Discipline Of The African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 21

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 13.

and denominations at the outset intended to adhere to the Great Commission, over time, however, distractions cause the efforts to become out of focus. When that happens the Great Commission slipped into the Great Omission.¹⁸ It is true in every situation, that if churches are going to be successful in building the kingdom of God on earth as it in heaven, a model of evangelism and discipleship has to be the mission under the direction of the Great Commission. It stands to reason that if the church is not observing the Great Commission as the guide for their main means by which they usher in the kingdom, then very little growth is going to take place, if any at all. It is not going to happen without following the directives of Christ.

Thom Rainer suggest, “There is such a thing as Great Commission Amnesia.”¹⁹ This is to imply that the key element in fulfilling the work of the kingdom is missing or in the words of Thom Rainer, “Great Commission Amnesia.” In other words, the church has forgotten to implement the only means by which the objective could be achieved.²⁰ That is the reason that for nine years there were not any converts in some of the churches where I presided as Presiding Elder. Of course that is an indictment against me as well, but in defense of myself, while a pastor in the AME Church, I always had at least one person to come to Christ every quarter. I have always believed what Jesus instructed me to do in regard to my call into ministry. I depended upon the power of Christ to do the work. After all John 6:44 declares, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” Likewise, Jesus said unto

¹⁸ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways To Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 41.

¹⁸ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). It is clear that the success of our ministerial call hinges upon us buying into the fact that we cannot do the work on our own; people are brought to Christ because of God and brought to God because of Jesus.

In this chapter Rainer lifts up the text that is used most to refer to the Great Commission: Matthew 28:19-20. It reads, “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” The imperative in those verses is “go.” But as we go, there are several sub-commands. We are to make disciples. We are to baptize. We are to teach.²¹ Our problem is that we have forgotten or as Thom Rainer suggest, we have “Great Commission Amnesia” and “Great Commission Omission.” Thom Rainer went further in saying, “Perhaps it is more accurate to say the church “decided” not to act upon Christ’s command.”²² This could be an accurate statement based upon the low rate of discipleship growth and expansion in all denominations.

Whether we are willing to admit it or not, we have dropped the ball as it relates to evangelism and discipleship. We are simply not doing the work required for our un-churched family members, co-workers, acquaintances and others to be interested enough to inquire about our personal work with Christ. We only talk about what everybody else is talking about rather than, when given an opportunity, introduce them to Christ.

²¹ Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, 41.

²² *Ibid.*, 41.

Acceptance is important to all of us. but our Great Commission spirit is not important enough for us to act upon as we should.

Lay Practitioners in Local Churches

The church, to a large extent, has lost its focus on measures of organization as well as discipleship and evangelism. Many denominational offices have turned to the business world executives and trainers to assist them in developing ministries of outreach and evangelism. For sure, the work of God's people and the church depends on the work of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of individuals who see the work of evangelism as its calling. Sometimes these pastors have overlooked much needed resources in their own denomination as well as the denominations of others. It is also of interest to note that in the pews of hundreds of churches are the laity, people who are captains of industry and some of them are workshop leaders who command healthy salaries and travel all over the world sharing on matters of leadership and marketing. More than a few of them are now sharing this knowledge with their local church and judicatories.

It is also of interest to note that many lay persons are now answering their calling to ministries. Leaving the labor force, many of these people have skills that are helpful in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. While some of these persons are in the ministry track, there are a number of laity who have enrolled in seminary. This group is not interested in becoming clergy; rather, their purpose in attending seminary is that they may become conversant of the world of the church along with its theologies, practices and administration (polity). These measures enable these persons to become more effective in

working with the church and its leadership track which includes evangelism and discipleship.

One such illustration of how the world of business intersects with the church and its training is seen in the story of Brian Parks. Mr. Parks is Vice President of GDS Knowledge Consultants. GDS is a leader in training and higher education consulting. This organization works with universities, workplace training and assisting students in applying for colleges and universities. On its website it has a list of most of its services and a cost next to it. It charges \$15,000 for work on a C V Writing. (One may wonder if there is a market for this with such a high cost. Apparently there is a market. Some of its consulting work cost upwards of \$45,000). Mr. Parks, just mentioned, is a consultant for this organization and an elder at the Redeemer Church of Dubai. He has over twenty years of student ministries experience. He is also a contributor to 9Marks, a web based ministry that gives best practices and how-to's on matters of preaching, theology, evangelism and many other disciplines. Mr. Parks has an article that would benefit any person or church group that is interested in the work of evangelism and discipleship. He is the author of this web based article below entitled "Six Benefits of Evangelism for Discipleship." Here are six ways that treating evangelism as a necessary part of discipleship helps to grow mature disciples.

Six Benefits of Evangelism for Discipleship

Evangelism Benefits

1. Evangelism helps keep the gospel central in our lives and churches.

2. Evangelism deepens our understanding of the most fundamental truths of Scripture.
3. Properly motivated evangelism grows our love for God and neighbor.
4. Evangelism prompts unexpected questions and objections from non-Christians, which can deepen our faith.
5. Evangelism protects us from mistakenly assuming that those around us are saved.
6. Evangelism increases the likelihood of being persecuted for the gospel, which leads to our growth.²³

Additionally, we know that every disciple is a believer; but we should also know and keep in mind that every believer is not a disciple. I am sure that when we speak of disciples in this day and age, many think that we are referring to some personality in a period in the distant past. However, we also know that even if there is this mentality prevalent in society, the true disciples of today must take up the charge and do extraordinary things as ordinary people. The Holy Ghost will motivate, empower and direct us as was done in the early history of the church when they turned their world upside down for the sake of Christ. However, being or becoming a disciple of Christ does not come without a cost.

1. THE COST OF BEING A DISCIPLE - Jesus is calling everyone to be his disciple. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is costly. It could cost you, your loved ones and even your life. Do you want to be his disciple? Are you ready to pay the price? What is the price? Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."
2. THE COST OF BEING A DISCIPLE - Deny yourself. (Luke 18:22-23)
3. THE COST OF BEING A DISCIPLE - Take up your cross. We will be ridiculed (Matthew 27:39). We are called to suffer death (Acts 10:39). We have to suffer shame (Hebrews 12:2). We will be rejected (1 Peter 2:4). Consider the following report from "Orissa burning" blog. "Mrs. Kamalini

²³ Brian Parks, "Six Benefits of Evangelism for Discipleship," accessed June 13, 2015, <http://9marks.org/article/journalsix-benefits-evangelism-discipleship/>.

Naik's husband was forced to become a Hindu for which the fanatics threatened to kill his mother. Seeing his mother under their grip Mr. Naik denounced his faith. Then they called his wife Kamalini Naik who was 7 months pregnant. She strongly stood for her faith in Christ and immediately the fanatics cut her into pieces and her one and one half year old son in front of her husband and other Christians."

4. THE COST OF BEING A DISCIPLE - Follow Jesus Christ every day. Be a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17). Battle against sin by crucifying flesh (Romans 6:1-7, 1 Peter 4:1-2). Abide in him (John 15:1-17).
5. THE COST OF BEING A DISCIPLE – Conclusion: If you want to be a disciple of Christ you must deny your comfort, priorities and even your life. Ask the Holy Ghost to give you the strength to stand up to the pressure. Expect to be embarrassed, ridiculed and rejected. Abide in Jesus Christ.²⁴

Now, we all know that all of this is a lot to ask. The point is that we do not have to ask for it; it comes with the territory. I know that the above litany of discouraging deterrents are not very appetizing to the casual on looker, and with good reason. The decision to become a disciple of Christ is a costly proposition. I am a personal witness. I answered the call as I was drawn to Christ by God, not really knowing what all was in store for me. I was literally attacked on the church ground by a young lady who had feelings for me that I did not reciprocate. It was a moment of horror and disbelief. My character has been assassinated numerous times. The members of the church refused to pay the obligations as per Discipline of the AME Church. I have had to borrow money to pay the assessments that the church should have paid, but they were disgruntled with me because I held to my oaths as a pastor and in obedience to my call. I can truthfully say, "I have been there and done that, and have a T shirt to show for it. But I am still here! And I know that the best days are still ahead.

²⁴ "The Cost Of Being A Disciple," accessed June 13, 2015, <http://www.slideshare.net/virtualprecher/the-cost-of-being-a-disciple-presentation>.

Would be disciples should not be discouraged because there is an upside to what at first glance seems to be only negative and joyless. There are rewards to this discipleship venture. Matter of fact, there are several compelling reasons to be nothing else but a disciple of Christ. There is so much mention of the many pessimistic aspects of discipleship that one would think, “what is in it for me?” A passage from Matthew’s Gospel speaks to us in this regard. “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls” (Mt 11:28-30). I have come to understand that there are certain principles involved in experiencing the true joy of discipleship.

- Principle 1: We must all have a master, and none is more gentle than the Savior. The Scriptures make it clear that we are the slaves of whatever it is that controls us (Romans 6:16). Ultimately, if we are not the servants of Jesus Christ we are slaves to sin and to Satan (Romans 6:16).
- Principle 2: Although the demands of discipleship are great, He never requires of us anything which He does not enable us to do. Let us not think about the demands of discipleship without also contemplating the dynamic enablement which He provides to meet them.
- Principle 3: It is only to His disciples that our Lord reveals His innermost thoughts and most intimate secrets. The reason for this was sought by His disciples, and the Lord explained it when He said, “To you have been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables” (Mark 4:11).
- Principle 4: Our rewards as disciples are based not on the magnitude of our actions, but on their motive. It is clear that God does not choose us on the basis of our potential contribution. He chooses the foolish things of this world (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). Is there anyone reading this document ever been foolish? I have and I like this level of wisdom better.

- Principle 5: Our great reward is Jesus Himself. In the book of Hebrews we are told that God is “a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). God also told Abram, “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Genesis 15:1 KJV).
1.
- Principle 6: There is nothing which the Lord denies His disciples which is for his ultimate good, and nothing which He takes away which He does not replace with something better. In the Garden of Eden, Satan succeeded in deceiving Eve into thinking that what God forbade was really good and that in so doing, God was not really good. Satan is always changing the price tags and the labels.²⁵

When we come to the matter of discipleship, Satan wants us to dwell on the negative side of the ledger. He wants us to ponder what we are missing. But God withholds no good thing from those who follow Him: “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11; cf. Psalm 34:10).²⁶

Now with all of this being said, Jesus does have some special affinity to this discipleship thing. I am led to think that he revered discipleship more so than he does Christianity. Christian is mentioned only three times in the whole of the bible. When it was mentioned, it was mentioned in jest; in other words Christians were a joke. However, disciple or disciples is mentioned 256 times. It seems to me discipleship is important to Jesus as He compels us to go and make disciples everywhere in the world.

²⁵ “Discipleship: Its Requirements and Its Rewards,” accessed June 6, 2015, <https://bible.org/seriespage/17-discipleship-its-requirements-and-its-rewards>.

²⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2012), 87.

²⁶ Ibid.

Strategies have been explored to rectify the destructive spiritual condition of humanity. We have looked at how discipleship and evangelism can be embellished in the context of theories of learning. We have looked at how theory of learning play out in psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, in the context of Christian education; we have also looked at how it plays out in the churches and an abbreviated discussion about how the church can put in place programs of Christian education for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship.

Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, says, “As we attempt to analyze dialogue as human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: *the word*. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; accordingly; we must seek its constitutive elements. Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers.”²⁷ There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world.²⁸ However, “It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action.”²⁹ Action and more action is the key to bringing about the needed mental and spiritual reversal that is needed in the world if we are to realize the Great Commission with the support of Hoses 6:16. Freire says, “Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men

²⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 87.

²⁸ Ibid., 88.

²⁹ Ibid.

and women transform the world. But while to say the true word, which is work, which is praxis, is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone.”³⁰ Now, as Freire suggest, I am taking his approach to the project. “All hands on deck.”

A Concluding Note

Let us now turn our attention to a subject that certainly enhances and supports the thesis of “A Model for Evangelism and Discipleship for the Macon South District.” The book *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains: Manual for Practical Theology*, written by Gerben Heitink, is on the cutting edge of what needs to be said to shed a brighter light on the fact of essential evangelism and discipleship. In this book practical theology as a theory of action is the empirically oriented theological theory of the medication of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society.³¹ Mr. Heitink stated, “In this book I developed a third perspective on the emergence of practical theology as a theory of crisis.”³² Now when we begin to notice that there is a crisis situation existing in the spiritual arena; that is when we have to accept the fact that the Creator of all life is upset about some earthly activity and is putting forth the effort to shift the outcome to a more amiable consequence for the perpetrator. We are in not only, a theory of crisis, we are in a full blown emergency mode for immediate Godly intervention. The present kingdom efforts have an even wider gap between theory and praxis than possibly, at any

³⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 88.

³¹ Heitink, Gerben, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains: Manual for Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 6.

³² Ibid., 85.

other time in the history of humankind. A model of harmony and conflict has to be wedded together for the sake of humanitarian assistance. So in this regard, practical theology as critical theory is a spotlight on changing the existing situation on the present norms and values of society and the hearts of humankind.³³

Practical Theology: The Black Preaching Tradition.

Early African Americans shaped ecclesial praxis through creative preaching and the worship experience in “hush harbors” and the few independent church meetings.³⁴ As is fairly clear, preaching for preachers of African descent has been difficult to say the least, especially under the oppressive state of slavery. Yet, the biblical stories went forth as they could find an affinity with Jesus, a personification of suffering. As always, the preachers of African descent have been, and for the most part, interpreted biblical stories into the language and experience of our people. Still the revelation of God’s will had to be revealed to the hearers to effect the God intended reaction and appropriate response to truth. Of course, the biblical text had to be the focal point from which all else derived. Although black preaching can be traced to the late colonial period, the first influx of black preachers probably came from those house slaves who worked closest to the slaveholders.³⁵ Is not that absolutely incredible. God used the oppressor to inadvertently teach the oppressed to be who he needed to preach to those that otherwise would not have the liberty to hear the gospel.

³³ Gerben, *Practical Theology*, 85.

³⁴ Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology For Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville, KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

Early generations of black preachers started predominantly in apprenticeship positions under more mature preachers. But the call to ministry and the gifts of preaching were developed in apprenticed positions or on the job training.³⁶ It is important to develop your own style or rather the manner in which God shapes the preaching attitude in you. Effectiveness is the overall objective. The purpose of preaching is to get the point across as it is recorded in the scriptures using the scriptures. You really cannot go wrong using the scriptures, because after you have read it, hoop it, sung it or sign language it, the burden of blood on your hand is released and placed on the hearer to respond to the truth sent from God to the heart of the hearer. Frankly, I prefer it that way; I simply want to give an account for my own stewardship or the lack thereof and not mine and a whole host of other folks stuff as well. Ultimately that will be the case if we preach not the gospel. Matter of fact, woe is me if I preach not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

³⁶ Andrews, *Practical Theology For Black Churches*, 21.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Methodology

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this project is derived from the fact that there are very few conversions in the churches on the Macon South District of the Macon Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the Sixth Episcopal District in Georgia. I am Presiding Elder of the Macon South District and there are twenty one churches on the district and nineteen pastors. They are all wonderful men and women who have some training for secular employment pursuits, and some have earned degrees from a theological institution. At least 10% of them have completed their theological training. However, at the same time, some of them do not have any formal training to speak of. Additionally, the lay people on the district are extremely loyal and dedicated to the work of building the Kingdom of GOD on earth as it is in heaven. However, they need guidance. I think the leadership is the drawback for this lack of effectiveness as it relates to evangelism and discipleship. For the approximately ten-year period of time I have served as Presiding Elder, less than one hundred people have become disciples of Christ from the twenty one churches combined. This project title is: "A Model for Evangelism and Discipleship for the Macon South District." The topic is based upon what is known as the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19-20 reads, "Go therefore and make disciples of

all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” This statement alone spoken by Jesus Christ assures us that the mission is possible. I am convinced that, if we as the preachers of the gospel and the servants who are called to make disciples, will adhere to the directives and authority given us through Jesus Christ and the power of Holy Ghost, we can fulfill the mission and purpose for which we are created. The problem is we are not preaching the gospel in its full strength whereas the hearts will be touched, minds will be changed and lives will be different and will become more like Christ in every way. I believe in, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:10 is altogether possible and is happening all over the country and around the world. Therefore, I have undertaken this project with the belief and certainty that it will prove to be fruitful and will be an instrument used to accomplish the Great Commission for the Macon South District, Macon Conference, Sixth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the entire universe.

Intervention

The context of this project is the Macon South District of the Macon Conference of the Sixth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia. I am the Presiding Elder of the Macon South District which is comprised of twenty one churches and nineteen pastors. There are ten churches in Macon, three in Fort Valley, two in Marshallville, two in Perry, two in Byron, one in Cordele, and one in Warner Robins. In this context, there should be productive work that results in hundreds of people

becoming a disciple of Christ. The fact is, however, that there have been very few people becoming disciples of Christ through the churches in the past ten years. In my estimation, something had to be done to change what is a dire situation in the life of the church. Of course, we are aware that if a church is not growing, it is dying. Therefore, with much trepidation, I devoted many hours to prayer and supplication for a solution to the problem the churches were experiencing on my district. At that point, I was directed to develop a ministry program that will address the failing attempts, or rather lack of attempts, to follow the mandates of Christ to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Mt 28:19-20). This is the only method that could possibly be effective because it is prescribed by the one who knows best what is required. Jesus knows the what, when, where, why and how to approach this with wisdom, knowledge and understanding the nature of the objective and what the goal is and how to reach it.

This is not to say that others are not interested and attempting the same pursuit and are making strides to alter the present condition of the church as it relates to efficient and potent and powerful evangelism and making disciples. There are pockets where growth is extraordinary, but at the same time there are areas where there is no growth whatsoever. I want to see and share in helping the Macon South District undertake this ministry program and this model for evangelism and discipleship to work to see the fruition of the Matthew 28:19-20. This passages should not only be read and spoken, but lived in triumph and in the true meaning and power as when it was first spoken by Jesus.

To that end, I called together my Professional Associate and Context Associates to have them examine and to dialogue about what I see as a problem on the Macon South District and to see if they were at least aware that there is some difficulty with maintaining and increasing the discipleship numbers in their churches. Are the numbers increasing or decreasing in their local church and across the district was the question posed. Obviously, they knew the numbers had declined because that was/is one of the main reasons for their complaining about having to pay “budget.” The budget is still high and the discipleship numbers are low and getting lower all the time. We met at one of the churches on the district on February 28, 2015 at 9:00 a. m. (See Appendix A). The meeting was well attended, and I read the “project proposal” highlighting the critical points of importance and concern. The pastors are acutely cognizant of the fact that the numbers are low because they stand in the pulpit Sunday after Sunday and see the empty pews. They responded to that proverbial question: “How many persons have been converted this Quarter?”¹ At one Quarterly Conference session, a pastor stated, “Presiding Elder, just skip down to number fourteen of the disciplinary questions because numbers one through fourteen are all “none.” I cannot express to you how hilarious that was. Sometimes you just have to laugh to keep from crying about the fact that we have been given a command, a commission, a task, a work for building the kingdom of God on earth and at times it seems that we take this lightly. And when I asked how many have we compelled to come, we can only answer God by saying, “none.” Eighty-five percent of the pastor’s answer to that question is “none.” Those present expressed that they are

¹ *The Doctrine And Discipline Of The African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2014), 216.

willing to make a commitment to seeing the project through to the end and doing all that they can to assure its success.

In order to know what Jesus is requiring of us we need to understand the biblical principles of how we would undertake this project. Of course, we sat down and planned the strategy we thought would best accommodate the requisite. Dr. Kenneth Cummings made a presentation before this context associate group about the doctoral program at United Theological Seminary and what the role of the context associates should be in the project being put forth. He did such an incredible job at helping us to understand the true dynamics of how to work through the project step by step. We set a date for the actual launching of the project which we hoped would have a great deal of fanfare. The district was made aware as a whole as I visited each church to hold the quarterly business meeting with each of the twenty one churches. Letters highlighting the training along with flyers were sent to each church, and other churches of the area of different denominations were invited to attend (See Appendix Band G). The classes required all of the attendees to register and that there would be no charge for attending this project ministry. In this meeting it was decided that committees were needed to effectively carry out this work. Three committees were formed: advertisement committee, registration /survey committee and lunch/hospitality committee. A resource committee was not necessary in that the Presiding Elder and Dr. Cummings would lead the workshops. The advertisement committee would be responsible for making flyers of the event and sending them out to churches and pastors. The registration/survey committee was responsible for registering those who attended the event as well as working with the pastors on the pre- and post-test surveys. The lunch/hospitality committee would be

responsible for preparing lunch for the sessions. All of the committees did their assignments on a timely basis, and we were on schedule in most instances. All of the nuts and bolts kind of things just fell into place, and there were very few glitches to speak of.

Now, the reason the project got off to such a marvelous start is because Dr. Cummings was kind enough to come to Macon and lead us through the initial stages, and he kept a close eye on our progress and monitored each phase. For this I am most appreciative and was encouraged to work even harder to make sure that the Great Commission will no longer be the Great Omission.

Dr. Cummings introduced the design and the mechanics of the Doctor of Ministry Program to the attendees, and it was met with a degree of excitement and questions were asked by a pastor about the possibility of some recruitment opportunities. At the close of the meeting we focused on where we go from here knowing that this is indeed where the work begins in earnest.

The next meeting of the context associate's group took us to Bethel AMEC in Macon, Georgia, on March 7, 2015 where we discussed the seminar dates, places and times. The first two seminars would be held at Bethel AMEC in Macon. The final seminar would be hosted by Adam Smith Tabernacle AMEC in Warner Robins, Georgia.

The discipleship training aspect was taken care of because I felt I was thoroughly prepared to lead the discussion on what I have a deep and compelling passion for. I became the leader for the discipleship presentations. So we moved forward with that aspect of the seminars. However, a person to lead the evangelism piece had not been identified or secured. In speaking to Dr. Cummings about this dilemma, he immediately volunteered to assist us by personally coming to Macon for the purpose of teaching the

evangelism classes for all three sessions. The context associates thought that six classes would be needed for this training; however, because of the time constraint of the pastors in particular, most of whom are bi-vocational, it was decided to go with three sessions with two class periods being in each session.

Discipleship in these churches has to become a top priority; consequently, the committee planned to begin the classes on April 11, 2015 hosted by Bethel AMEC in Macon. The second session would be held on May 9, 2015 also at Bethel in Macon. The last session would be held at Adam Smith Tabernacle on May 30, 2015. All sessions would begin promptly at 9:00 a. m. A lunch break would be included. The training session would conclude at 1:00 p. m. The attendance was excellent at all sessions.

In the context associates meeting on March 7, 2015, the discussion about the development of pre- and post-test surveys were foremost in our minds. It was decided that a different pre- and post-test survey would be developed for both the clergy and the laity in that they were at different points in their understanding of scripture, church polity and administration. (See Appendix C and D). Different post-test surveys would be developed as well for the clergy and laity (See Appendix E and F).

The pre-test would be given at the beginning of the first seminar and the post-test would be given at the conclusion of the last seminar. The questions for both pre- and post-tests were developed by the committee and the pastor. Dr. Dan Stevenson, one of my professional associates and a graduate of UTS doctoral program and a presiding elder in the AME Church, agreed to work with the committee on the surveys and assisted in making them more specific. The surveys were to me mailed to the secretary of the group by March 21, 2015.

Research Design

The mixed methodology was used in this project. Both qualitative and quantitative principles were incorporated into the surveys. Pre-test survey questions and post-test survey questions were used to determine what the test group is communicating regarding this particular subject matter. The pre-test survey questions and the post-test survey questions were a combination of open ended questions and close ended questions. Open and close ended questions served my purpose more so than other methods. Open ended questions allow the respondent to give voice to their true impression or knowledge about the proposition being presented. Although close ended questions do limit the possibility of extensive elaboration, all answers do not require an extensive narrative response to adequately address or reply to the inquiry.

According to John W. Creswell, the mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms of research. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study.² Qualitative research, as Creswell describes, is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants' setting; analyzing the data inductively, building from particulars to general themes; and making interpretations of the data meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible writhing structure.³

² John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2009), 230.

³ Ibid.

On the other hand, Creswell describes quantitative research as a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables can be measured typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. The final written report has a set structure consisting of introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussion.⁴

Measurement

The goal of the project is to train pastors and lay people how to evangelize and make disciples for Christ in response to his Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. The Great Commission was given to us along with the authority to execute, carry out, accomplish, finish, complete, live up to, satisfy and all other adjectives that may apply to bring this command into fruition. We are empowered to the degree that we cannot fall short of this Kingdom of God assignment. The results can only be determined or measured by what the next few weeks, months and years will make for. I will only be able to ascertain a sense of whether there is a change of state when I visit the churches of the district for quarterly conference business sessions every three months. If there is a transformation, it will be brought about only by and through the power and grace of God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the presence and unction of the Holy Ghost. Again and again, there will be that proverbial question, “How many persons have been converted?”⁵ When the response is one or more consistently across the district at

⁴ Creswell, *Research Design*, 233.

⁵ *The Doctrine And Discipline Of The African Methodist Episcopal Church*. (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2014), 216.

that time, we will know that the Great Commission is no longer what appears to have become: the Great Omission.

Instrumentation

As already stated, the instrumentation was the use of the pre and post-test surveys that are posed in questions. They have provided me with the information needed to make an intelligent assessment of what further strategy may be called for to be in full harmony and compliance with all that God has put into my spirit to accomplish through this project. In addition to what has been mentioned above, word of mouth is always the best form of advertisement. Members of the district spread the word like wild fire. I was surprised on several occasions when I would be at a function here and there to be approached by some other persons from different denominations about the seminars. People talked and usually it is about something positive.

I think that the pre- and post-test surveys served to be the best possible instrument. It was the only plausible mechanism to be used for this project for the maximum feedback essential to get a good reading as to where the project is and how much further exertion it will demand for it to be acceptable unto our God and to reach its full potential.

There was never any doubt about which of the instruments I would use, because the pre- and post-test surveys method was a resignation in my mind and my spirit like none of the others did. To the best of my knowledge, it has proven to be the most advantageous and suitable scheme for the good fortune and destiny of this project.

Implementation

Context and Professional Associates

I came into this doctoral program with many associations in the AMEC who were already in the program and a few who had recently graduated. As a result, I reached out to some of them who assisted me in this journey. My professional associates were Dr. Dan Stevenson (also a presiding elder), Dr. Bernard Clarke who is also an educator and Dr. Jonetta Prater, all of whom are AMEC pastors who graduated together from UTS in May of 2013. Dr. Stevenson gave me ideas and suggestions on developing the pre- and post-test surveys. Dr. Prater helped in processing the findings from the surveys and how this information could be put in a narrative form. Dr. Clarke looked over my foundational papers and offered a critique and feedback. I was honored when these doctors of the church agreed to share in supporting, assisting and leading me through this process to have arrived at this point on the journey.

My context associates were also very helpful in the project from the beginning to the end of it. The context associates assisted in the understanding and focus of what the project was really all about. They knew that in the quarterly conference business sessions what the answer would be when I asked that proverbial question about conversions. The clergy were Revs. Marvin Colbert, Charlie Hicks, Maria Gordon and Earnest Gordon. The lay persons were Latrellis Dent, Ashley Ballard, Pam Veal and Shirley Washington. Rev. Colbert was the host pastor for two of the sessions. He was on the committee that was responsible for hospitality. He also assisted in helping publicize the training event. Rev. Charlie Hicks helped work out the logistics of the program which included location

and what type of spaces would be needed for the training. Rev. Maria Gordon hosted the first context associate meeting at Steward Chapel AMEC in Macon, Georgia. She also provided the technology equipment for all of the training. Rev. Earnest Gordon helped in planning the launch date and helped to prepare the district for the sessions. Ms. Latrellis Dent and Ms. Pam Veal were responsible for registering all of the attendees and awarding the certificates at the final session. Mr. Ashley Ballard and Ms. Shirley Washington were responsible for passing out and collecting the pre-test and post-test surveys as well as being responsible for the wrap up of the training. My wife, Mrs. Sharon Williamson, was also a context associate. She was responsible for designing the certificate of training as well as assisting me in ways too numerous to count.

The Timeline and Project

I was overwhelmed and pleased at the response of the professional associates and more than pleased with the context associates who went beyond what I would think in the planning and execution of this project. The first meeting of the context associates was on February 28th at Steward Chapel in Macon. The work done by this committee was stated above. The second meeting of the context associates was on March 7th at Bethel AME Church.

The first training session was held on April 11th at Bethel in Macon. Following the opening worship and introduction, pre-test surveys were passed out to both the lay and clergy. As pointed out earlier, the context associated developed different surveys for the lay and clergy.

The second training session was held on May 9th at Bethel in Macon. The third and final session was on May 30th at Adam Smith Tabernacle AMEC in Warner Robins, Georgia. Again, the training sessions were focused on the critical subjects of discipleship. I led the three training sessions on discipleship while Dr. Cummings led the three training sessions on evangelism.

Training Sessions

Dr. Cummings and I collaborated on a curriculum for these six units that were drafted into three sessions. Again, he led the evangelism topic, and I led the discipleship topic. Dr. Cummings has written extensively on both of these subjects. I used much of what he has written. Some of his work is copyrighted and some is not. The outline for the class sessions is found in Appendix H. Dr. Cummings writes, “At the center of the Judeo-Christian teaching is the theme *relations*.” He goes on to say, “In Jesus we see the face of God. Through his itineration and association with his disciples and others, we come to know God and God’s will for us in different ways. These ways are constructed and based on Jesus’ understanding of himself and his relationship to God and what he understood to be the will of God in how the people were to relate to one another.”⁶ It is against this back drop that this book was written as a study guide for discipleship. Although I used much of this material, I also used a significant amount of my own work in preparing for the training session which involved slide presentation, lecture and breakout into small groups.

⁶ Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr., *The Relationships of Jesus* (Columbus, OH: Kenneth Cummings Ministries, 1998), 7.

Training Session One on Discipleship - April 11, 2015:

I used the first five units of this book, *The Relationships of Jesus*, and expanded the topics with my own work. Below is an outline.

- Lordship
- Citizenship
- Fellowship
- Friendship
- Kinship

Each of these themes were explored by examining the definition of each word along with examining passages of scripture that spoke to each theme. The topics are not thrown out arbitrarily; rather, they form a progression of thought and understanding as a follower of Jesus moves toward being fully engaged as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Training Session Two on Discipleship - May 9, 2015:

The same book was used as a primary guide. The second half of the book *The Relationship of Jesus* was explored. The topics/chapters are listed below:

- Worship
- Stewardship
- Messiahship to Exalted Lordship
- The Lord's Day, The Lord's Prayer, The Lord's Supper
- Discipleship (See Appendix I)

Again, each chapter/topic follows a progression of thought of the previous chapter which concludes with the theme of discipleship. In no way are these topics meant to be the sum total of discipleship; rather, they serve as a blueprint or a template as a place to begin.

Training Session Three on Discipleship - May 30, 2015:

In this session I used a study guide by Dr. Kenneth Cummings: *The Basic Tenets of the Christian Faith*. Dr. Cummings writes, “When one accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and seeks to lead a new life following the commandments of God, one is faced with a life-long journey of being a disciple and a life-long activity of studying the ways of discipleship.”⁷ In this study guide he lifts up a series of themes and the significance for a follower (disciple of Christ) in grasping the meaning of it and living it out in his or her life. The ten themes are listed below.

1. The Promise of a Messiah
2. Jesus the Messiah: Anointed and Set Apart
3. Follow Me: Jesus Begins His Ministry
4. The Beneficent Ministry of Jesus
5. The Crucified Messiah
6. He is Risen
7. Exalted: He is Lord
8. The Holy Spirit
9. Judgment and Restoration

⁷ Kenneth Cummings, *The Basic Tenets of the Christian Faith* (Hephzibah, GA: Kenneth Cummings Ministries, 2011), 7.

10. The Call for Repentance and Baptism (See Appendix I)

These units were used as topics of discussion. Attention was given to the meaning of each topic, where it is found in scripture and how each person can process it in becoming a better disciple.

The first half of the day's training was led by me on the topic of discipleship. The second half of the day was led by Dr. Cummings who provided leadership on the topic of evangelism.

Training Session One on Evangelism – April 11, 2015:

Dr. Cummings pointed out that in order for a person to be “more” effective in reaching souls for Christ, it is important that the would-be evangelist or teacher have some tools to be more effective; hence, the first session was devoted toward the workshop on “Leading and Writing Bible Study.” In becoming more effective in a process, one can then become more effective in witnessing and discerning how to witness to individuals who are different than you. Below is an outline of this session.

1. What Every Teacher Needs to Know

- Taking inventory
- Discerning God's Presence (Ex. 4:15; Jn 14:16; Mk 1:16-20, I Cor 12:12-31)

2. Bible Study: A Model for Teaching

- a. Luke 19:1-10
- b. Bible Study Outline

3. Writing a Bible Study: Interactive Work of a Large or Small Group

- Pull up scripture on projector or newsprint
- Explore the text: What are the sights, sounds, colors? Who is the audience?
What is the message? What are the main points?
- Use Bible Dictionary for certain words.
- Use Bible Commentaries to explore study.
- Raise questions.

These points were raised to alert the pastor or lay person that he or she needs to be prepared in not only preaching and teaching but also witnessing. It is time for preachers and lay people alike to approach study from the perspective of “a church school or bible academy” as opposed to some “hit and miss” study/gathering time.

Training Session Two on Evangelism – May 9, 2015:

The presentation of this day was devoted to the subject of “Great Truths and Mandates from Scripture.” A slide presentation was used to present some of these great themes which were then discussed and processed in how each person can incorporate these biblical truths and raise their consciousness for evangelizing. Some of these themes are listed below:

- The Great Commandment – Mt 22:37- 40
- The Great Commission – Mt 28:18-20
- The Great Requirement – Micah 6:8
- The Great Connection – Romans 12:4-5

- The Great Commitment – Luke 9:23
- The Great Redemption - 3:16

These passages were read and an exposition of the meaning of each was given. The large group then broke into small groups, and the members of each group discussed these passages of scripture and reported back when the larger group assembled again.

Training Session Three on Evangelism – May 30, 2015:

This last session turned its attention to looking at the definition of evangelism and exploring some of the texts in Acts and the Epistles where such work took place. This was followed by an exercise that each church should do if they are to take evangelism seriously.

Assessing Your Ministry Context: (a) Every church that is intentional in its outreach of faith in evangelism needs an evangelism committee. (b) The work of evangelism (and its committee) is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Work of the Evangelism Committee: It must be composed of people who are serious and dedicated to the faith. The committee must have an environment scan of the church and its community. Jesus said, “You shall be my witnesses first in Jerusalem, then Judea and then Samaria.” (Read Acts 1:8)

Environment Scan: Jerusalem speaks to those who have already come to faith but have left or are inactive for whatever reason. In this group are relatives, friends and neighbors. Samaria speaks to those who are in the immediate area where the church is located. The uttermost part speaks to those in the general vicinity or anyone we come into contact with otherwise.

Congregation Strategies for Reaching People: This includes recognition (and follow up) of visitors, tracts, prayer cards, canvassing the neighborhood, website, social media and demonstrating God's love.

Goal Setting: Each church should set goals for attendance for the year. This means that the church needs to keep records of attendance. These goals should also involve a set number for persons returning to church after an absence and a different number for profession of faith (conversions).

This session concluded with encouraging each pastor and lay persons to push its respective church to develop a Ministry Action Plan.

When the final training session concluded, two of the context associates passed out and collected the post-test surveys. After this, there was a brief moment of worship followed by the awarding of certificates to the participants.

Data Collection

The manner in which the data was collected was through the pre-test survey and the post- test survey method. I preferred this method because open-ended questions are designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer using the subject's own knowledge and/or feelings. It is the opposite of a closed-ended question which encourages a short or single-word answer. Additionally, open-ended questions also tend to be more objective and less leading than closed-ended questions. In this research, I posed questions to both pastors/preachers and the laity. The questions for the pastors/preachers were different from those of the laity. I included preachers in case there would be clergy persons who are not pastors. The pastors/preachers were asked to answer fifteen questions on the pre-test survey and ten questions on the post-test survey. Of the nineteen pastors on the

Macon South District, only six attended the training. Of the six pastors who answered the pre-test survey, all responded to the first six questions with the same answer. Some of these questions are listed below (See Appendix C).

1. Do you believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Yes _____ No _____

2. Do you believe it to be relevant in this time period?

Yes _____ No _____

3. Can we make disciples today as Jesus commanded His disciples to do in the 1st century AD?

Yes _____ No _____

4. Have you had any training in making disciples?

Yes _____ No _____

5. Will you be willing to attend classes on how to make disciples?

Yes _____ No _____

Of course, these were the yes or no answer questions. However, questions eleven through fifteen are where it got a little fuzzy for them. Three of the six had taught a class on evangelism and discipleship; they did not feel confident that their congregations would be open to developing an evangelism and discipleship team in their church. They cited that the size of the congregation would be an opposing factor to this concept. They were forthright in stating that not much emphasis had been placed on evangelism and discipleship either in the past or presently. Because of their employment schedules, they are not in a position to spend adequate time to the evangelism and discipleship endeavor because of what it demands. Three of the six pastors are on board with evangelism and discipleship, but the unconcerned and the neglectful others are the reason we are facing

the possibility of the Great Omission rather than embracing and forging ahead with directives of the Great Commission. These are some of the findings of the pre-test survey.

The post-test survey was given to the pastors/preachers on the day of the final and concluding session. Of the six, they all believe that preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ is relevant for successful evangelism and discipleship. They believe that evangelism will result in people becoming disciples of Christ. They all feel that when people become disciples of Christ, they are indeed better able to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others who are not religious in nature. They felt that attending the classes on evangelism and discipleship had impacted and strengthen their resolve and has caused them to have a new and different outlook on why they were called into ministry in the first place. They have a clearer understanding of the fact that evangelism and discipleship are essential components for the kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven. They agreed that they will employ what they have been exposed to in the classes in their work in ministry where they pastor and elsewhere. If the classes were offered again in six months, they assured me that they would attend with eagerness. Holding these training sessions two times per year is the desire of those who were in attendance. The lesson information was given to them so that it can be a part of their library and they will be able to access it and reference it upon demand or request for sharing.

The post-test surveys' results were the best response from the pastors that I could have hoped for. The classes proved to be thought provoking for the pastors. The substance of the doctrine's resignation with the spirit/soul imbued the assemblage. It appears to have reached levels of spiritual consciousness that perhaps laid dormant until now! It met a need that perhaps was forgotten; it also sparked an inner core of awareness

that aroused the true nature of the claim of a call from God for the purpose of doing the work of evangelism and discipleship as understood in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

Now the pre-test survey for the lay is also fifteen questions in number. The lay attendance was much stronger in numbers than the pastors/preachers. That is to be expected for the simple reason: there are many more lay people than there are ministers. Now, of the 110 lay people who attended over the three session period of time, most were not clear on what a disciple of Christ is. Seventy-five percent of the responses did not come close to being the correct answer. (That is to say that they did not have an understanding consistent with biblical truths and teachings). Some of these questions are listed below.

1. Give your definition of discipleship.
2. Give your definition of evangelism.
3. Is discipleship training a part of the ministry at your church?
Yes _____ No _____
4. Approximately how many disciples have been made since you have been attending your church? _____
5. Do you believe that we are called to evangelize the world?
Yes _____ No _____
6. Do you believe that evangelizing the world is possible?
Yes _____ No _____

The answers were considerably better when asked to give the definition of evangelism. They were able to eke out an answer that is acceptable or more in line with traditional Protestant understanding. Some did not provide an answer at all which is disturbing for people who have been a part of the church for as long as some of them have. About 15% of the overall attendees did not make an attempt to answer the question, it was simply left blank. Discipleship training has not been a part of the ministry at their church; therefore, it is understandable as to why they failed to be able to reply to several of the questions. Fifty percent of them believe that we are called to evangelize the world; but after further examination of the actual percentage of those who have literally done the work of an evangelist, the proportion of those who have done this work dropped substantially lower than the 50% level of those who believe that they are called to evangelize the world.

Ninety-nine percent of the reaction to the question: “What do you think is the cost of becoming a disciple?” caused me to be commiserative and at the same time helped me to better understand why the church is despairing dangerously toward catastrophe. However, I do know that Matthew 16:18 declares, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” At least 90% of them had never attended a class of any sort as it relates to discipleship and evangelism and had not witnessed to anyone at any point of their lives. Thankfully that was the results from the pre-test survey.

Now the post-test survey answers revealed and disclosed some additional frightening results. They still did not get it. After the six classes of intense teaching, instruction and educational activity, they did not seem to have apprehended or comprehend the concept of what their role in the church truly is. More than half of them

still could not define the word evangelism and express what they believed to be the purpose of it. The world cannot be evangelized and disciples of Christ cannot be made with the present structure, system of rules, instrumentality, scheme, arrangement or method. A different plan of action and a different strategy has to be enacted for the opposite consequence to occur. However, they agreed that if other classes were offered on the same topics, they would readily attend and invite others to attend as well. With further instruction, they feel they would be confident enough; and with a greater knowledge of the subject matter, they would willingly teach classes at their church. Very few, but some of them, struggled with the question, "From what you have learned in the seminars, do you believe that you are a disciple of Christ?" I was overjoyed at the answers to that question and of course the classes had something to do with the responses. They referred to themselves as members of a particular church. Seemingly, they had not given it any thought that there is a vast and distinct difference between the two.

Some of the questions on the post-test for clergy are listed below (See Appendix E)..

1. Do you believe preaching the Gospel from the Bible is relevant to successful evangelism and discipleship?
Yes _____ No _____
2. Do you believe that evangelism will result in people becoming Disciples of Christ?
Yes _____ No _____
3. When people become Disciples of Christ, do you think that they are better able to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others who are not religious in nature?
Yes _____ No _____

4. Now that you have attended the seminars on evangelism and discipleship, how will it impact your results in gaining conversions for baptism?
5. Now that you have attended the seminar on evangelism and discipleship, do you understand that evangelism and discipleship are essential for the Kingdom of GOD to come on earth as it is in Heaven?
Yes _____ No _____

Both clergy and laity were asked also if they would be willing to serve on an evangelism and discipleship board and would they be willing to accept the challenge? The majority of them said yes. That is always how you want the respondents to react: in a fashion to be willing to re-create themselves to become who they have been anointed and appointed to be for the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Summary of Learning

This has been an incredible journey that has extended me beyond my guilt-edged imagination of exploration. Deep in my heart I knew that the need for evangelism and discipleship had to be addressed on the Macon South District in the Macon Conference of the Sixth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia. It was not clear for the longest time as to what could be done to at least create a dialogue about these concerns. We preach about it and pray about it, but what was anybody doing about it? I never dreamed that I would have to attend school to be introduced to possibilities of this type of campaign. Attending United Theological Seminary has been a tremendous blessing for me. The focus group “Prophetic Preaching and Praxis” and the wonderful mentors made it conceivable to research and investigate the notion of what is being done and what can further be done to increase the likelihood of biblical evangelism and discipleship effectiveness in this time period.

Admittedly, it was an elusive emotion or passion that eluded me from the outset as to what the project would be. It came into focus ideally while interacting with fellow students and especially while in discussions with my mentors. It became crystal clear that “A Model for Evangelism and Discipleship for the Macon South District” would be the topic for deliberation and study.

From the various “Intensive” topics, we know that the need for the work of discipleship is extensive. “Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence: A Faith Response,” just to name one, is by far the most alarming and intriguing phenomenon for me that was brought to the forefront during my entire doctor of ministry experience. This, along with other areas, gave me pause as to how is the church understanding this phenomenon and what, if anything, is being done about it.

This doctoral program experience has been tremendous. Dr. Wendy Deichmann, Dr. Gina Stewart, Rev. Rosario Picardo and Bishop W. Darin Moore, just to name a few, were extraordinary in their presentations on their subject matter of preaching and plenary subjects and content. Unknowingly at the time, all of this would be beneficial to me as I engage the clergy and laity on my district about new ways in which we can learn about matters that we can disciple others about. Beyond the plenary sessions, the peer sessions and the time spent in the library contributed to the fixation on evangelism and discipleship.

The numbers of new people becoming disciples of Christ are declining in every denomination. African Methodism is experiencing growth in Africa, but the numbers are on a downslope in the United States. United Theological Seminary stresses preaching and doing it well. Some of the most intellectually productive preachers were brought to preach at the Intensives. Therefore, I am clear that preaching is the force that moves the

process of evangelism and discipleship along. Preaching is the mandate given by Christ.

And as you go, preach, saying, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The United Theological Seminary experience has inspired me to bring attention to the Macon South District that we must become more deliberate and intentional in our preaching. Although I have been aware of the fact that we must prepare ourselves to preach, this cognitive content has reinforced that knowledge and undergirds and strengthens my resolve to work to make the Great Commission come to fruition. There were so few to become disciples of Christ in the past ten years during my tenure as a Presiding Elder. This reality check has caused me to begin to shed light on this great loss and misfortune to the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. There were only twelve conversions in the district in nine years. This is beyond sad; this is a travesty.

On the other hand, when Peter preached, Acts 2:41 records, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” I have embraced the fact that first of all the people must “gladly” receive the Word of God and then they will become disciples of Christ. On the other hand, Romans 10:14 reads. “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” All of the components are in place, but the result is lacking, wanting, nonexistent, and absent. Belief is involved in becoming a disciple of Christ as well as hearing the Word of God which is a prerequisites to discipleship. Gladly receiving his word, believing in him, and hearing are obligatory, requirements, a duty and a responsibility of the person becoming a disciple of Christ. But, preaching and a preacher must come into play if the process is to be completed.

Three sessions of training were implemented to assure that the ingredients (gladly receiving), the formula (believing in God) and the constituent (preaching/teaching) were included. We asked the questions on the pre-test survey, and we asked the questions at the end of the training sessions on the post-test survey. The differences are astounding. The attendees who were ignorant to the facts of evangelism and discipleship came away with a renewed sense of urgency to gain as much knowledge about the subject matter and to share it at every opportunity.

The answers from the post-test surveys indicated that there is further interest in additional sessions of training in evangelism and discipleship. However, to help to assure maximum support from the pastors, I would make it mandatory attendance for pastors. Under ordinary circumstances, the laity will support religious events, especially if they are free. Some pastors seem to be on an ego trip and feel that they do not need training of any sort. There has to be a way to generate some emotional arousal among the clergy so that they will come to the understanding that the Great Commission does not come to realization without us.

Suggested Improvement for Future Projects and a Concluding Note

This project was brought about because of the low numbers of conversions on the Macon South District. Of the twenty one churches, only twelve converts were reported for the entire 2014-2015 Annual Conference Year in the Macon Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia in the Sixth Episcopal District. Because of these findings, a hypothesis was formulated to suggest that this situation can and will be reversed. I believe that Matthew 28:19-20 is also meant to have effect in the 21st

century as Jesus intended for it to be in all times. The research project was developed because training was needed on the clergy level and the lay level. It was designed to examine the degree of training they had or classes they had attended for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship. It was discovered that neither the clergy nor the lay had any formal training in this area.

Since this research and project have been completed, I highly recommend that continued training be provided for both clergy and lay. The lessons will be provided through a manual that will be formulated and put into the hands of each of the nineteen pastors who serve the twenty one churches on the Macon South District. There was quite an awakening and disappointment to the fact that so few people were converted during the course of the year and especially at their church. They wholeheartedly agreed that more emphasis has to be put on evangelism and discipleship. They also accept responsibility for the deficiency of converts and pledged to utilize the training they received to plan and set up a ministry team to go about doing what is required of them as followers of Christ.

If anyone deems this project noteworthy, and has a desire or if there is a need for such a ministry in your church and in your community, it is easily replicated and should be shared by the masses for evangelism and discipleship fulfillment to come to fruition.

I found that the open ended and close ended questions were the most appropriate and effective because they allowed for direct and accessible information that eliminated rhetoric while advancing smoothly to other parts of the research. There is a necessity for additional training, seminars and workshops for evangelism and discipleship because more homes need to be infiltrated with the good news of the gospel. We have to find

ways to introduce the gospel to people who do not attend church and otherwise will not be exposed to the teachings of Jesus Christ. These training sessions can provide and prepare an otherwise unequipped churchgoer with the knowledge of the kingdom work that Jesus sent us all to do with confidence and spiritual fortitude to make the Great Commission a twenty-first century reality.

All of us can be blessed to the degree that we can be a blessing to others. I am better able to share my knowledge of how to process and literally do evangelism and discipleship with the pastors and the lay people after living this project day and night for years. It became a part of me and it influenced me with a greater passion to carry through the mission and purpose for which I am created. Matter of fact, the underlying nuances of the project obligates me and invigorates me even the more now that I have lived through every detail of its unfolding into a finished product for this season.

The research project culminated at Adams Smith Tabernacle AME Church with an “Awards Celebration.” Certificates were given to each attendee who registered, and gifts were given to the context associates for their hard work and dedication.

Now in conclusion, the research was rewarding to me because it proved that you can get support when there is a mission centered on something that shall affect, impact, shape and influence the future of your life, health and spiritual wellbeing now and in the lifetime to come.

The most disappointing and dissatisfaction I experienced from the overall aspect of the project was the lack of pastor support. Many of them ignored the clarion call. The churches that they pastor are suffering from low attendance, low growth and no evangelism and discipleship activity whatsoever. I fully expected them to attend.

Although six of the nineteen did attend at least one of the sessions, the other remaining fourteen elected to forgo the prospect of renewing, retooling, restoring, and rescuing their failing ministry. Their diligence to this matter has to be resurrected for the kingdom of God to come. Again, if this project were to be replicated, the attendance of the pastors would be mandatory with no exceptions or excuses.

We planned a grand finale. The wrap up was spectacular. The people were so joyful with exhilaration. It was as if they were completing the highest stratum of academic achievement and educational prowess possible. There were smiles and laughter all over the sanctuary. One gentleman received his certificate and danced all the way back to his seat saying, "I graduated, I graduated." The whole assemblage exploded in laughter. They took time to complete the post- test survey with eagerness. I would like to think that they were honored and delighted to share some of the knowledge they had acquired in a way of comparison to the degree of cognition with which they entered the classes. Certificates were prepared (See Appendix K) for each person who registered. I read the certificate content and shook each of their hand while the photographer took our picture. I have referred to the project implementation as seminars and classes, but I prefer to regard them as training sessions. Jesus really took time and effort to train and teach his disciples all about the work of making disciples. "And he said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of man" (Mt 4:19). In this respect Jesus used examples of learning methods to ensure that they were able to grasp the entire meaning of the message that he communicated to them. I think what is most profound in all that he did in teaching them was the fact that he used himself. The call of God is ever before us. I am glad that

God in Jesus is not only using me but also those of the Macon South District and beyond.

To God be the glory for great things he has done!

APPENDIX A
MEETING WITH CONTEXT ASSOCIATES

**Doctor of Ministry Program
Harvey R. Williamson
Project Planning
Meeting With Context Associates**

February 28, 2015

On February 28, 2015, I asked members of the Context Associates Team to meet me at Steward Chapel AMEC, 887 Forsyth Street Macon, Georgia, at 11:00 a. m. Reverends Marvin Colbert, Maria Gordon and Ernest Gordon were in attendance. Others present were members of the Administrative Staff of the South Macon District; also present were members of the Context Associates Team including Mrs. Pam Veal, my wife Sharon E. Williamson, and Mrs. Anita Cummings. We began with a brief devotion. I formally introduced the persons present (listed above) to Dr. Cummings and them to him.

Dr. Kenneth Cummings discussed the Doctor of Ministry Program and then led the discussion about how the project is to be carried out.

The Context Associates agreed to assist in the following ways:

1. Be committed to the project
2. Understand Biblical principles
3. Plan and execute the project
4. Plan the Project launch date:-Announce to the District
5. Plan the workshop training schedule
6. Work out logistics (location)
7. Publicity
8. Who will be responsible for each category
 - a. Registration
 - b. Room assignments
 - c. Refreshments
 - d. Leading devotion
9. Develop Pre and Post-test surveys
10. Identify resource persons to lead the workshop sessions.

We scheduled the next meeting for March 7, 2015 at Bethel AMEC in Macon at 9:00 a. m. to discuss the agenda for carrying out the project.

Suggested Agenda:

1. Place: Bethel AMEC Macon: Reverend Marvin Colbert host Pastor
2. Dates
3. Time/schedule
4. Devotion
5. Pre-test survey
6. Flyer announcing training
7. Resource persons to lead/teach
8. Wrap up celebration and certificates and awards

I thanked everyone for coming and sharing in this effort and led in the closing prayer.

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PASTORS

March 24, 2015

Dear Pastor and District Component Leader,

To God be the glory; great things He has done. It is my sincere delight and hope that you will consider joining Dr. Kenneth Cummings and me in a seminar on “Evangelism and Discipleship” on April 11, May 9 and May 30, 2015. The District will be conducting Evangelism and Discipleship classes for the District and all interested persons. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, faculty mentor at United Theological Seminary, will be the teacher for Evangelism; and I will be the teacher for Discipleship. We would like to have the pastors and all clergy persons and not less than five members/disciples of Christ from each church to attend. Of course the entire district is welcome, and we expect that you will be happy to come and partake of these moments of information sharing with us. “The more the merrier.”

The time for each session is 9:00 a. m. for registration (NO FEE). Classes will begin promptly at 9:30 a. m. We will prepare a delicious and nutritious lunch (FREE) to be served at 11:10 a. m. and will resume classes at 11:45 a. m. until 1:00 p. m.

The classes will be held at Bethel-Macon, 3607 Earl Street Macon, Georgia. Reverend Marvin Colbert will be our host for the April 11th and the May 9th classes. Reverend Jacquelyn Craig, our pastor at Adams-Smith Tabernacle 304 Green Street Warner Robins, Georgia, will host the concluding class on May 30th. This will be your regular Component meeting date. Therefore, we are asking the Component Leaders and their members to be with us for the wrap up and the closing ceremony, the presentations and the awarding of certificates.

Thank you in advance for your support and cooperation in this matter as I am and remain your fellow servant in Kingdom building.

The work is all divine.

Harvey R. Williamson, Presiding Elder
Harvey R. Williamson, Presiding Elder

APPENDIX C
PRE-TEST SURVEY FOR CLERGY

Pre test Survey for Clergy

1. Do you believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Yes _____ No _____

2. Do you believe it to be relevant in this time period?

Yes _____ No _____

3. Can we make disciples today as Jesus commanded His disciples to do in the 1st century AD?

Yes _____ No _____

4. Have you had any training in making disciples?

Yes _____ No _____

5. Will you be willing to attend classes on how to make disciples?

Yes _____ No _____

6. Give your definition of a disciple.

7. Give your definition of what it means to do evangelism.

8. Have you ever personally done any evangelizing?

Yes _____ No _____

9. Would you be interested in attending classes on evangelism?

Yes _____ No _____

10. Do you feel that evangelism can be effective in this time period?

Yes _____ No _____

11. Have you ever taught a specific class on discipleship or evangelism?

Yes _____ No _____

12. Do you feel that making disciples and evangelism is a part of the pastor's responsibility as a servant of God?

Yes _____ No _____

13. How do you think your congregation will feel about developing a discipleship and evangelism team?

14. How much emphases has your church put on evangelism in the last year?

15. Do you have the time to make disciples and evangelize in your present state of life?

Yes _____ No _____

If you need additional space to complete your answers, please use the back of these pages.

APPENDIX D

PRE-TEST SURVEY FOR LAITY

Pre-test Survey for Laity

1. Give your definition of discipleship.
2. Give your definition of evangelism.
3. Is discipleship training a part of the ministry at your church?
Yes _____ No _____
4. Approximately how many disciples have been made since you have been attending your church? _____
5. Do you believe that we are called to evangelize the world?
Yes _____ No _____
6. Do you believe that evangelizing the world is possible?
Yes _____ No _____
7. What instrument is needed to make disciples and evangelize the world?
8. Is there a difference between discipleship and membership?
Yes _____ No _____
9. What do you think is the cost of becoming a disciple?

Is it a long process or is it immediate?
10. Describe what happened to you when you became a disciple of Christ.
11. Is your life better now than when you were not a disciple of Christ?

12. Do you know any passages in Scripture on:

- A. Discipleship
- B. Evangelism

13. Have you ever attended a class on discipleship or evangelism?

Yes _____ No _____

14. Have you witnessed to anyone who accepted Christ?

Yes _____ No _____

If more space is required for completing your answers, use the back of these pages.

APPENDIX E
POST-TEST SURVEY FOR CLERGY

Post-test Survey for Clergy

1. Do you believe preaching the Gospel from the bible is relevant to successful evangelism and discipleship?

Yes _____ No _____

2. Do you believe that evangelism will result in people becoming disciples of Christ?

Yes _____ No _____

3. When people become disciples of Christ, do you think that they are better able to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others who are not religious in nature?

Yes _____ No _____

4. Now that you have attended the seminars on evangelism and discipleship, how will it impact your results in gaining conversions for baptism?

5. Now that you have attended the seminar on evangelism and discipleship, do you understand that evangelism and discipleship are essential for the Kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven?

Yes _____ No _____

6. Are you willing to put forth efforts to use what you have learned in the seminar on evangelism and discipleship? Are you willing to employ it and share the results of your findings in six months and again in one year?

Yes _____ No _____

7. If additional classes on evangelism and discipleship were available, would you attend them?

Yes _____ No _____

8. Since attending the seminar on evangelism and discipleship, have you attempted to exercise any of its tenets?

Yes _____ No _____

9. Will you use any of the materials received at the seminar to teach your congregation and others evangelism and discipleship within the next few months?

Yes _____ No _____

10. Are evangelism and discipleship important enough to you for you to make some sacrifices of self-denial for the sake of winning souls for Christ? Explain

APPENDIX F
POST-TEST SURVEY FOR LAITY

Post-Test Survey for Laity

1. What is your definition of evangelism after attending the seminar on evangelism and discipleship?
2. What is your definition of discipleship after attending the seminar on evangelism and discipleship?
3. Will you be willing to attend future seminars on evangelism and discipleship?
Yes _____ No _____
4. Will you be willing to teach a class on evangelism or discipleship at your church?
Yes _____ No _____
5. From what you have learned in the seminars, are evangelism and discipleship necessary in the life and growth of the church?
Yes _____ No _____
6. From what you have learned in the seminars, do you believe that you are a disciple of Christ?
Yes _____ No _____
7. Will others recognize that you are different in the way you witness for Christ?
Yes _____ No _____
8. Now that you know the cost of becoming a disciple of Christ, are you willing to pay the cost?
Yes _____ No _____
9. Are you better prepared to witness to others about Christ since you attended the seminars on evangelism and discipleship?
Yes _____ No _____
10. Can you start an evangelism and discipleship class for people outside your church?
Yes _____ No _____

11. If you are asked to serve on an evangelism and discipleship board, would you be willing to accept the challenge?

Yes _____ No _____

12. Do you believe that evangelism and discipleship should be a part of your everyday walk in Christian service?

Yes _____ No _____

APPENDIX G

EVENT FLYER

**THE
SOUTH MACON DISTRICT**

PRESENTS:

**A
SEMINAR
ON**

**EVANGELISM AND
DISCIPLESHIP**

YOU ARE INVITED!

WHEN: April 11, May 9 and May 30, 2015

WHERE: Bethel-Macon 3607 Earl Street Macon, GA April 11 and May 9, 2015

Adams-Smith Tabernacle 304 Green Street Warner Robins, GA May 30, 2015

WHO: Dr. Kenneth Cummings and Presiding Elder Harvey R. Williamson: Teachers

SCHEDULE: 9:00 a. m.-1:00 p. m.

**No Registration Fee!
FREE LUNCH!**

CERTIFICATES AWARDED!

APPENDIX H
EVENT PLANNING AND SCHEDULE

Event Planning and Schedule

March 7, 2015

On Saturday March 7, 2015 at 9:00 a. m., members of the Context Associates Team, including Reverends Marvin Colbert and Maria Gordon along with Mrs. Shirley Washington, Ms. Latrellis Dent and Mrs. Pamela Veal, met at 3607 Earl Street in Macon, Georgia, at Bethel-Macon.

The dates for the workshop were discussed and agreed upon:

- April 11, 2015 (Bethel-Macon –Host)
- May 9, 2015 (Bethel-Macon-Host)
- May 30, 2015 (Adams-Smith Tabernacle 304 Green Street Warner Robins, GA-Host)

Dr. Kenneth Cummings will teach the classes on evangelism and Presiding Elder Harvey R. Williamson will teach the classes on discipleship.

Class time schedule:

9:00 a. m. – 9:30 Registration and 1st. choice class selection
9:35 a. m. – 9:45 Devotion
10:00 a. m. – 10:45 a. m. Workshop/classes
11:00 a. m. – 12:00 p. m. Lunch
12:05 p. m. – 12:50 p. m. workshop/classes
12:55 p. m. -1:00 p. m. Survey and Benediction

We are asking for all pastors, clergy persons and five disciples of Christ from each church to attend each session.

The questions for the pre-test and post-test surveys should be emailed to the secretary, Mrs. Pam Veal, by March 21th. 2015.

The Flyer has been designed and approved and a letter has gone out to all the churches on the South Macon District.

APPENDIX I
DISCIPLE TRAINING SEMINARS

Discipleship Training Seminars

Training Session One on Discipleship - April 11, 2015

I used the first five units of this book, *The Relationships of Jesus*, and expanded the topics with my own work. Below is an outline.

- Lordship
- Citizenship
- Fellowship
- Friendship
- Kinship

Each of these themes were explored by examining the definition of each word along with examining passages of scripture that spoke to each theme. The topics are not thrown out arbitrarily; rather, they form a progression of thought and understanding as a follower of Jesus moves toward being fully engaged as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Training Session Two on Discipleship - May 9, 2015:

The same book was used as a primary guide. The second half of the book *The Relationship of Jesus* was explored. The topics/chapters are listed below:

- Worship
- Stewardship
- Messiahship to Exalted Lordship
- The Lord's Day, The Lord's Prayer, The Lord's Supper
- Discipleship

Again, each chapter/topic follows a progression of thought of the previous chapter which concludes with the theme of discipleship. In no way are these topics meant to be the sum total of discipleship; rather, they serve as a blueprint or a template as a place to begin.

Training Session Three on Discipleship - May 30, 2015:

In this session I used a study guide by Dr. Kenneth Cummings: *The Basic Tenets of the Christian Faith*. Dr. Cummings writes, “When one accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and seeks to lead a new life following the commandments of God, one is faced with a life-long journey of being a disciple and a life-long activity of studying the ways of discipleship.”¹ In this study guide he lifts up a series of themes and the significance for a follower (disciple of Christ) in grasping the meaning of it and living it out in his or her life. The ten themes are listed below.

- The Promise of a Messiah
- Jesus the Messiah: Anointed and Set Apart
- Follow Me: Jesus Begins His Ministry
- The Beneficent Ministry of Jesus
- The Crucified Messiah
- He is Risen
- Exalted: He is Lord
- The Holy Spirit
- Judgment and Restoration

¹ Kenneth Cummings, *The Basic Tenets of the Christian Faith* (Hephzibah, GA: Kenneth Cummings Ministries. 2011), 7.

- The Call for Repentance and Baptism

These units were used as topics of discussion. Attention was given to the meaning of each topic, where it is found in scripture and how each person can process it in becoming a better disciple.

APPENDIX J
EVANGELISM TRAINING SEMINARS

Training Session One on Evangelism – April 11, 2015:

Dr. Cummings pointed out that in order for a person to be “more” effective in reaching souls for Christ, it is important that the would-be evangelist or teacher have some tools to be more effective; hence, the first session was devoted toward the workshop on “Leading and Writing Bible Study.” In becoming more effective in a process, one can then become more effective in witnessing and discerning how to witness to individuals who are different than you. Below is an outline of this session.

What Every Teacher Needs to Know

- Taking inventory
- Discerning God’s Presence (Ex 4:15; Jn 14:16; Mk 1:16-20; I Cor 12:12-31)

Bible Study: A Model for Teaching

- a. Luke 19:1-10
- b. Bible Study Outline

Writing a Bible Study: Interactive Work of a Large or Small Group

- Pull up scripture on projector or newsprint
- Explore the text: What are the sights, sounds, colors? Who is the audience?
What is the message? What are the main points?
- Use Bible Dictionary for certain words.
- Use Bible Commentaries to explore study
- Raise questions.

These points were raised to alert the pastor or lay person that he or she needs to be prepared in not only preaching and teaching but also witnessing. It is time for preachers and lay people alike to approach study from the perspective of “a church school or bible academy” as opposed to some “hit and miss” study/gathering time.

Training Session Two on Evangelism – May 9, 2015:

The presentation of this day was devoted to the subject of “Great Truths and Mandates from Scripture.” A slide presentation was used to present some of these great themes which were then discussed and processed in how each person can incorporate these biblical truths and raise their consciousness for evangelizing. Some of these themes are listed below:

- The Great Commandment – Mt 22:37- 40
- The Great Commission – Mt 28:18-20
- The Great Requirement – Micah 6:8
- The Great Connection – Rom 12:4-5
- The Great Commitment – Lk 9:23
- The Great Redemption - 3:16

These passages were read and an exposition of the meaning of each was given. The large group then broke into small groups, and the members of each group discussed these passages of scripture and reported back when the larger group assembled again.

Training Session Three on Evangelism – May 30, 2015:

This last session turned its attention to looking at the definition of evangelism and exploring some of the texts in Acts and the Epistles where such work took place. This was followed by an exercise that each church should do if they are to take evangelism seriously.

Assessing Your Ministry Context: (a) Every church that is intentional in its outreach of faith in evangelism needs an evangelism committee. (b) The work of evangelism (and its committee) is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Work of the Evangelism Committee: It must be composed of people who are serious and dedicated to the faith. The committee must have an environment scan of the church and its community. Jesus said, “You shall be my witnesses first in Jerusalem, then Judea and then Samaria.” (Read Acts 1:8)

Environment Scan: Jerusalem speaks to those who have already come to faith but have left or are inactive for whatever reason. In this group are relatives, friends and neighbors. Samaria speaks to those who are in the immediate area where the church is located. The uttermost part speaks to those in the general vicinity or anyone we come into contact with otherwise.

Congregation Strategies for Reaching People: This includes recognition (and follow up) of visitors, tracts, prayer cards, canvassing the neighborhood, website, social media and demonstrating God’s love.

Goal Setting: Each church should set goals for attendance for the year. This means that the church needs to keep records of attendance. These goals should also involve a set number for persons returning to church after an absence and a different number for profession of faith (conversions).

This session concluded with encouraging each pastor and lay person to push its respective church to develop a Ministry Action Plan.

APPENDIX K

CERTIFICATE

THE MACON SOUTH DISTRICT
OF
THE
MACON GEORGIA CONFERENCE
OF
THE
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Rt. Reverend Dr. Preston W. Williams II, Presiding Bishop

Has successfully completed the course of study for the Seminar on
Evangelism and Discipleship

sponsored by the

MACON SOUTH DISTRICT

CERTIFICATE OF AWARD

May 30, 2015

Presiding Elder

Presenter

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